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PLAYING SANTA CLAUS,
AND
Other Christmas Tales.



BY
MRS. S. P. DOUGHTY.

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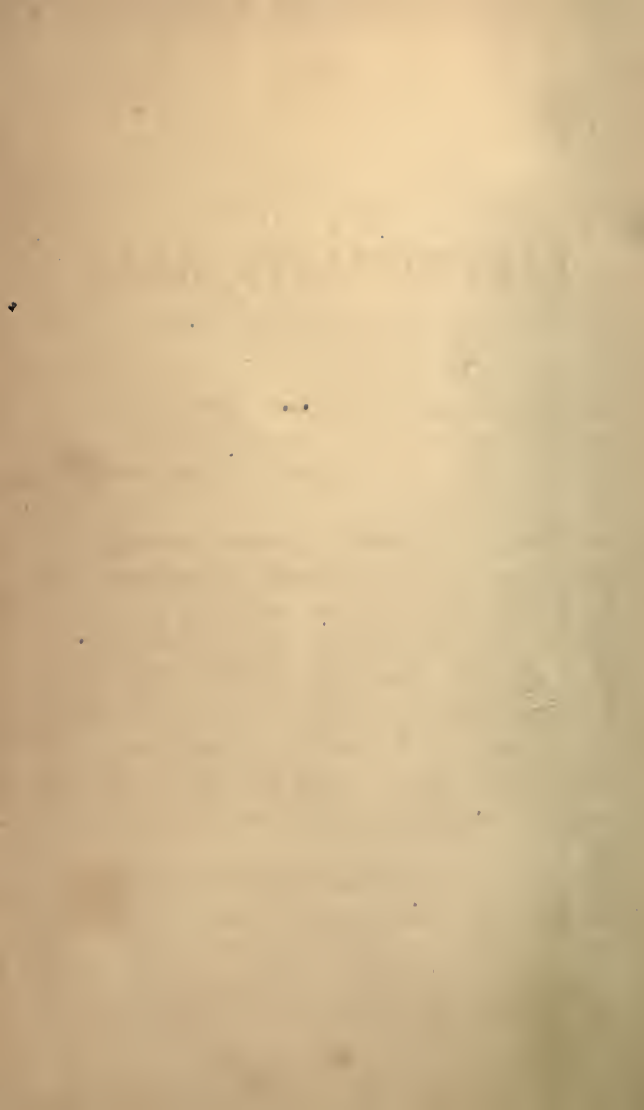
CONTENTS.

	Page.
PLAYING SANTA CLAUS	7
NOTHING TO GIVE	19
WILLIE'S GOLD DOLLAR	30
THE THANKSGIVING PARTY	40
A CHRISTMAS STORY	48
APRIL FOOL'S DAY	61
THE CHRISTMAS TREE	70
A DREAM	77
NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT	87
THE LITTLE MATCH BOY	104
I FORGOT	123
THE SILVER MORNING AND GOLDEN DAY	151



P R E F A C E .

A MERRY Christmas and a happy New Year to you, dear children ! This little volume comes to you as a holiday gift, and in its pages we have endeavored to show you that true and lasting happiness can be found only in doing good to others. Let the lesson sink deep into your hearts. Even the least among you can do much good. Look around you. Do not wait for some great opportunity to offer, but with willing hearts and busy hands perform the most trifling acts of usefulness to others. Continue to do this throughout the year, and we will promise you that when another New Year dawns upon the earth, you will look back with rejoicing, giving thanks to your Heavenly Father that you have found that true happiness which can never be taken from you.



PLAYING SANTA CLAUS.

“WAKE up, wake up, Emma!” said little Caroline Meredith, as she gently shook her sister very early one winter’s morning; “I have something very pleasant to tell you.”

“What is it, Carrie?” answered the sleepy little girl, as she rubbed her eyes, and tried to comply with her sister’s request to “wake up.”

“Do you remember what day it is, Emma? To-morrow will be Christmas; and this evening will be Christmas Eve.”

“O Carrie, so it will!” exclaimed Emma, now fully awake; “and we shall hang up our stockings; and, oh, what beautiful things Santa Claus will bring us!”

“And what fine times we shall have to-morrow!” continued Caroline. “Aunt Margaret and all our cousins are coming to dine with us.”

“Oh, it will be delightful!” replied Emma. “We can show them our presents, and perhaps they will

bring theirs to show to us ; and we shall play so happily together ! ”

“ And, you know, I have made a needle-book to give Aunt Margaret ; and you have a work-bag for her,” added Caroline. “ I am sure she will be pleased.”

“ I know she will,” said Emma ; “ and father and mother will be pleased with the little presents we have got for them. I like to give things away ; don’t you, Carrie ? ”

“ Yes, very much,” replied Carrie. “ I should like to be Santa Claus.”

“ O Carrie ! what a funny Santa Claus you would make ! ” exclaimed Emma ; and both of the little girls laughed heartily at the idea.

“ How I would come tumbling down the chimney, with my bag full of toys ! ” continued Caroline. “ I would fill your stocking just as full as it could be, Emma.”

Emma laughed again ; and then she was silent for a few moments, and looked very thoughtful.

“ Do you think Santa Claus fills the poor children’s stockings, Carrie ? ” she asked.

Carrie looked grave also, as she replied,—

“ I don’t know, Emma. I would fill their stockings if I were Santa Claus. But, Emma,” she continued, after a short pause, “ you know there is not really any

such person as Santa Claus. It is our father and mother, and other kind friends, who fill our stockings."

"I know that, Carrie; and this makes me afraid that the *poor* children do not have their stockings filled; because, you know, their friends have no money to spend for toys and pretty presents. Don't you think it would be a good plan for every rich child to be a Santa Claus to some poor child?"

"O, yes, Emma!" exclaimed Carrie; "I think it would be a *beautiful* plan. How came you to think of it?"

"I do not know, Carrie; but I suppose the good angels whispered it to me. You know mother says that all our good thoughts are from the angels."

"Well, that is a good thought, I am sure," replied Carrie; "and I am very glad that our father is rich, so that we can play Santa Claus. And then it is very pleasant to live in such a handsome house, and have such nice clothes and playthings; don't you think so, Emma?"

"Yes, I do," answered Emma; "and I always feel sorry for poor little children, who have none of these good things. You know little Mary and Ellen Drayton? Their mother is very poor."

"I know she is, Emma; but she always seems cheerful, and the little girls look very happy. How neat and clean they always look!"

"Yes, Carrie: but their clothes are very old and patched; and they have very few books, and no playthings but one rag baby. When mother sent me there, the other day, to ask Mrs. Drayton about doing some work for her, I stopped a few moments to talk to the little girls."

"Let us be their Santa Claus, if mamma is willing," said Carrie. "I have got two little gold dollars that I will spend for them."

"And I have two more," added Emma. "I meant to have bought a large doll; but I would rather give the money to Mary and Ellen."

The little girls now hastened to dress themselves, that they might go to their mother, and tell her of their plan, and ask her consent to spend their money in the way that they proposed.

Mrs. Meredith was quite willing, and, indeed, she was much pleased that her little daughters had thought of a way in which they might do good and give pleasure to others; and she said that she would add two more gold dollars to theirs, and would go with them to buy the gifts for Mary and Ellen.

After breakfast was over, she talked a little more with them on the subject, and told them that it would not be best to spend all the money for books and toys, because the little girls were much in need of warm clothing, and it would be doing them more good to buy some things of that kind.

Caroline and Emma were willing to do as their mother thought best; but they begged her to buy a *few* books and toys, because they thought it would make the little girls so happy. They felt very happy to find that six dollars would buy so many things. There was not only a pretty dress for each little girl, and some warm stockings and shoes, but also a dress for Mrs. Drayton; and there was still money enough left for two pretty books, two dolls, and some other toys. To these, Mrs. Meredith proposed that Caroline and Emma should add some of their own books and playthings, which they could well spare; and she said that she had several articles, which would be useful to Mrs. Drayton, which she would put with those they had bought.

The little girls could hardly contain their delight when they saw all these nice presents packed in one large basket, and another one filled with tea, sugar, pies, cakes, a roasted chicken, and some other articles of food, that Mrs. Drayton and her children might have a good Christmas-dinner.

Carrie and Emma were so happy that they could hardly wait for evening, that they might play "Santa Claus," as they called it; and they quite forgot to think about the pretty presents which they hoped to receive themselves, because they were so busy in thinking of the joy that Mary and Ellen would feel when the baskets should be unpacked.

“Let us try to be patient, and wait until the girls have gone to bed,” said Carrie. “Mrs. Drayton sits up very late to sew ; and, if mother will let John carry the baskets for us, we will go and knock softly at the door, and give her the things, and ask her to put some of the toys into Mary’s and Ellen’s stockings. How surprised they will be in the morning !”

Emma readily agreed to this plan ; and, as the house was very near, Mrs. Meredith was quite willing that they should do so.

We will now leave them to pass a happy afternoon in assisting their mother in some preparations which she wished to make for the entertainment of the young friends whom they expected to spend Christmas with them, while we take a peep into Mrs. Drayton’s neat but humble dwelling.

Mary and Ellen were seated close by the side of their mother, who was sewing busily on a pair of coarse overalls,—the last of a dozen pairs which she had engaged to make. Mary had learned to sew neatly enough to be of some assistance, and her mother had just given her leave to hem the bottom of one of the legs of the overalls ; while little Ellen was reading aloud from a story-book, which had been given to her at school as a reward for her good behavior. The story which she was reading was a Christmas-tale ; and it told of a happy family of children who gathered around the beautiful Christmas-tree.

When Ellen had finished her story, she laid down the book, and seemed very thoughtful for a few minutes. Presently she looked up in her mother's face, and said, very gently,—

“Will you please to let us hang up our stockings to-night, dear mother? This is Christmas Eve. I should like a pretty tree like the one in the story; but it will be just as pleasant to hang up our stockings. Don't you remember the pretty things that we found in them one year, Mary, a good while ago, when father lived in this world with us?”

Mrs. Drayton's eyes filled with tears; and Mary whispered,—

“Hush, Ellen! you grieve poor mother.”

“No, dear, she does not grieve me,” replied Mrs. Drayton, making an effort to speak calmly and cheerfully. “You may hang up your stockings, my children; but you must remember that mother has no ‘pretty things’ to put in them. The weather is now becoming very cold, and you are in need of many articles of clothing, which I am working hard to try to procure for you. I shall take these overalls home this evening; and, if I get the money which I have earned by making them, I will try to put something useful into each stocking: but you must not expect to find toys or candies.”

Mary's countenance brightened as she exclaimed,

“O mother! I shall like a new apron better than a toy; for I have worn mine so long, and it looks so very shabby.”

But little Ellen looked sorrowful as she said, “I wish you could buy just one stick of candy, mother,—only one; half for Mary, and half for me.”

“Well, dear, I will try to do so, as it is for Christmas,” answered Mrs. Drayton; and, at this reply, Ellen’s face was also bright with smiles.

Evening soon came: and, as their mother was obliged to leave them alone while she carried home the work which she had finished, the little girls concluded to hang up their stockings, and go to bed early, so that they need not feel lonely while she was gone. They were soon fast asleep, and dreaming of the new aprons and the stick of candy which they were to receive the next morning.

When Mrs. Drayton promised her children these things, she did not feel the least doubt that she should be able to keep her promise; for the man for whom she had been working always paid her very punctually, and on this night he would owe her nearly two dollars. Of this sum, a large portion must be spent for food and fuel; but there would be enough left to buy an apron for each of the little girls, and the stick of candy which Ellen so much desired.

“Poor children! it is not often that I can spend

even one penny for them, except to purchase what is really necessary," thought Mrs. Drayton, as she entered the shop where she was to leave the work. To her great disappointment, there was no one there but a young lad, who told her that his employer had gone away for the evening.

"You can leave the work," he added, "and call again any day after Christmas. Mr. Williams will settle with you."

Mrs. Drayton's heart was very sad as she silently placed her bundle upon the counter and left the shop. She had but six cents in the world; and this must be spent for a loaf of bread, or her little ones would suffer for food on Christmas Day, when they expected to be so happy.

Her eyes filled with tears as she passed the groups of merry children, and heard them talking so eagerly of the expected pleasures of the next day, and thought of the empty stockings which her own darlings would find when they awoke in the morning. But she was a good woman; and she tried hard to put away these sad feelings, and to believe that the Lord would do what was best for her and for her children.

"I cannot buy the aprons," she said: "but I will take a loaf of bread which was baked yesterday,—that will cost but five cents; and, with the penny which remains, I will buy the stick of candy. That will comfort them a little."

She went into the baker's shop for the loaf; and the woman in attendance, who had often seen her before with her two little girls, handed her two cakes, saying kindly,—

“Your children will like a cake for Christmas.”

Mrs. Drayton thanked her, and walked homeward with a lighter step; for this would be such a treat to the little ones, that they would almost forget the promised aprons.

The last penny was spent for the candy; and she gently opened her own door, and entered noiselessly, lest she should disturb the sleeping children.

“It will be but a poor Christmas,” she said, as she opened a small cupboard, and, placing the bread in its accustomed place, looked around upon the scanty portion of food which it contained; “but we shall not really suffer from cold or hunger, and this should make us very thankful.”

As she said this, she heard a low knock at the door; and, hastening to open it, she was surprised to find Caroline and Emma Meredith, accompanied by John bearing two large baskets.

“Have Mary and Ellen gone to bed?” inquired Carrie, eagerly.

“Yes, they are both asleep, miss; but I can awaken them, if you wish.”

“Oh, no!” was the reply; “we wanted them to be

asleep, and so we waited as long as we could. We are playing Santa Claus ; and we have brought some things for you and the girls."

"And we want you to put some in their stockings," continued Emma. "Did they hang them up?"

"They did, indeed, my dear young lady ; but I little thought that they would be filled. I spent my last penny for one stick of candy to divide between them."

"Oh ! there is plenty of eandy, and toys also, in the baskets," replied Emma. "Fill the stockings full ; and tell Mary and Ellen that Santa Claus sent them."

Mrs. Drayton's heart was almost too full to speak as they wished her good-night ; and she could not help weeping with joy as she unpacked the baskets, and saw all the good and useful things which they contained.

The stockings were soon loaded with toys and books, and papers of eakes and candies ; the eupboard was well filled with articles of food ; while the new clothes were spread upon a chair, where the children could see them when they awoke.

You may be sure it was a merry Christmas morning both at Mrs. Meredith's and Mrs. Drayton's.

Carrie and Emma were full of joy, not only from receiving a variety of beautiful presents, but from the thought of the pleasure which Mary and Ellen would

feel when they found their stockings so well filled. And breakfast had not long been over, when the two little girls came hand in hand, with sparkling eyes and hearts full of gratitude, to thank the young ladies for their kindness.

“Oh, we never saw so many pretty things!” exclaimed Ellen. “Mary and I are so glad, and we thank you so much! Mamma cried when she saw us jump and laugh so much when we awoke this morning; but she said she cried because she was glad too, and not because she was sorry.”

“Yes, she was *very, very* glad,” said Mary. “We needed all the things very much; and poor mamma had no money.”

Mrs. Meredith and Carrie and Emma felt very happy as they listened to these expressions of the children's gratitude and joy; and, when Mr. Meredith heard the story, he said he would send a load of wood and coal to Mrs. Drayton, that he might have his share in “playing Santa Claus.”

NOTHING TO GIVE.

“A HAPPY New Year to you, Lottie!” exclaimed a bright-eyed and neatly dressed little girl, as she tapped at the door of a small apartment in the second story of a large dwelling-house which was occupied by a number of poor families.

The summons was answered, and the greeting returned, by Lottie herself, who proved to be a pleasant-looking little girl of about the same age as the visitor.

“A happy New Year to you, Miss Emily!” she replied; “and thank you for calling to see me so early in the morning. Will you walk in?”

“No, thank you, Lottie: for I have several places to go to; and I must be at home in good season. Mamma says that this is the day for the gentlemen to make calls, and the ladies must stay at home; but she gave me leave to call upon you, and three or four other little girls who go to sabbath school with me. Here is a New-Year’s gift for you, Lottie. Is your mother well?”

“Oh! thank you, Miss Emily. Yes, my mother is quite well. She will be here in a few moments.”

“I will call and see her another time. Good morning, Lottie!” And, with a kind smile, Emily ran quickly down the steep stairs; and, in another moment, Lottie heard the street-door close after her.

The “New-Year’s gift” which she had handed to Lottie was contained in quite a large and neatly folded parcel; and the little girl hastened to close the door of the room, that she might examine it at her leisure.

She placed it upon the table, and untied the string; but still she did not feel quite willing to unfold the paper until her mother returned to share her pleasure.

She had not long to wait: for, just then, a step was heard in the entry; and her mother entered, with a small basket on her arm, containing a few articles of daily food which she had been purchasing.

The paper was quickly unfolded now; and a neat hood and shawl, with a pair of warm mittens, soon appeared.

Lottie clapped her hands with delight. “Miss Emily brought them to me, mother!” she exclaimed. “Is she not very kind? Now I can go to sabbath school all winter; for my frock and shoes are quite good yet: but my thin cape and my straw hat were very cold.”

“They were indeed, my child,” replied Mrs. Wilton

(Lottie's mother); "and I am very grateful to the young lady and her mother for their kindness in sending you these warm garments. This is a happy New-Year's Day for you."

Very happy did Lottie feel, and bright as the sunshine was her face, for some minutes: but then a shadow seemed to come over her glad spirit; and, after a little thought, she said, almost sadly, "How very happy Miss Emily must be to be able to give such nice presents to poor people, mother! How I wish I had something to give!"

"And have you nothing, Lottie?" asked Mrs. Wilton, kindly.

"Nothing at all, mother. You know we are so poor, that we need everything we have for ourselves."

"We are, indeed, quite poor, Lottie; but that need not prevent us from giving to others. You cannot go, as Miss Emily does, and carry warm garments to those who are poorer than yourself; but still you may do much for their happiness and comfort. Give them the love that is in your little heart; and you will soon find that you have no reason to say that you have nothing to give."

"But love will not do them any good, mother," persisted the little girl. "I want to be able to make New-Year's gifts to those who are in want."

"Give them your love, and you will often find that

the gifts will come of themselves, Lottie," replied her mother. And, as she spoke, Lottie's countenance brightened; and she exclaimed,—

"O mother! I know what I can do, if you are willing. I can give a part of my breakfast to those two little children up in the third story; for you know they are a great deal poorer than we are."

"I think they are, Lottie; and you may divide your breakfast with them, if you please. And here is a New-Year's cake that the baker gave me for you when I went for the loaf of bread."

"Such a nice large one! and so pretty!" said Lottie, as she looked admiringly at the figures upon the cake. "I can give a part of this to the children, mother."

"Very well: now eat your own bread, and then you may go with theirs. So you will have the pleasure of making one New-Year's gift this pleasant morning; and if you keep your heart filled with love, and all your servants busy in helping you to make this love useful to others, you will find many opportunities to make gifts before the day passes away."

"My *servants*, mother!" exclaimed Lottie. "Who are they?"

Mrs. Wilton smiled, as she replied, "You have two bright eyes, Lottie; and, with these, you can look around for those who are in need of your assistance. You have two quick ears with which to hear their

wants ; and you have hands and feet which will cheerfully work at your bidding."

The shadow had quite gone from Lottie's heart and from her face : for she now began to see clearly what her mother meant ; and she had already formed many little plans for doing good.

A large portion of her own breakfast and of the tempting cake were given to the hungry little children ; and their joy, and the eagerness with which they ate the food, showed that the gift was a most acceptable one.

The next hour was passed in assisting her mother : for, as Lottie justly observed, " Mother ought to have a New-Year's gift as well as other people ;" and the only thing she could give her would be a little more help than usual.

Mrs. Wilton was glad to find her room in neat order, and to be able to sit down to her sewing at an early hour : for she was making some garments, which she had promised to have completed within a few days ; and, if they were ready at the promised time, she was to receive extra pay.

" And now, mother," said Lottie, " I will take the basket, and try to find some bits of wood around the new buildings. Perhaps I shall find some one to whom I can make a New-Year's gift while I am gone."

“I have no doubt you will, dear,” replied Mrs. Wilton; and Lottie ran merrily away, while her mother employed her hands very busily, and her thoughts no less so: for New-Year’s Day brings many recollections,—both sad and pleasant memories of years gone by. Mrs. Wilton thought of the time when she had a kind husband to love and care for her, and when a fine manly boy, some two or three years older than Lottie, was among her household treasures. Both husband and son had long since passed to the spiritual world; and the poor widow was now obliged to work hard for the support of herself and her little girl. But she had a cheerful, uncomplaining spirit; and she trusted with full faith in our heavenly Father, who never forsakes the widow and the fatherless.

The little that she could earn with her needle was not always sufficient to supply them with necessary comforts; but, as yet, they had never suffered from cold or hunger. Often their most pressing wants, as in the case of Lottie’s hood and shawl, had been unexpectedly supplied; and, thankfully acknowledging the Providence which watched over them, the widow worked away steadily and cheerfully, with little anxiety for the future.

But we must accompany little Lottie, as she bounded merrily along, with her basket in her hand. The first object which attracted her attention, when she reached

the new buildings, was an old woman, bent nearly double with infirmity and age, slowly endeavoring to gather a few of the chips which lay scattered upon the ground.

“Poor old creature!” thought Lottie, pityingly. “I have a great mind to fill her basket before I do my own. There are not many children picking up chips this morning: and I shall find enough, I dare say.”

“I will fill your basket for you,” she said kindly, as she drew near to the woman; “and you can sit on these boards, and rest.”

The old woman looked surprised, and, at first, seemed a little afraid to let Lottie take the basket. Perhaps she thought she might run away with the pieces she had already collected; for some children are wicked enough to do such things. But, when she looked in the little girl’s pleasant face, all her fear went away; and she gladly rested herself upon the boards, while Lottie’s busy hands and feet worked briskly until the basket was well loaded with the nice dry chips.

“Have you far to go? Shall I help you to carry it?” asked Lottie, as she placed the load at the old woman’s feet.

“You are a good child; and I thank you,” was the reply. “But I am well rested now, and can get home

by myself. Make haste, and fill your own basket. Good-by! and may God bless you!"

Lottie's heart was very glad, as she watched the old woman moving quickly along with the basket.

"She walks quite fast," she said to herself. "I am so glad that I helped her, and gave her time to rest! Those chips were a nice New-Year's gift for her."

After half an hour of patient labor, Lottie succeeded in filling her own basket, and set out on her return home.

As she turned into the street which led to her own dwelling, she saw a richly dressed lady upon the sidewalk, a little in advance of her. Lottie looked admiringly at her velvet hat, and the soft, warm furs, and splendid silk dress.

"What a happy lady!" she said to herself. "What beautiful New-Year's gifts *she* can make!"

As Lottie said this, a rich lace-veil, which had been lightly thrown over the lady's hat, fell upon the sidewalk; and the owner passed on without observing her loss.

"Stop, ma'am! please stop!" called the little girl, as she placed her basket upon the stones, and ran quickly along, with the veil in her hand.

"Thank you, my child," said the lady, as she turned around in answer to Lottie's repeated calls. "I should have been very sorry to have lost my veil. Here is a quarter of a dollar for you."

“No, thank you, ma’am,” returned Lottie, blushing deeply. “I do not want any pay. I am glad that I found your veil. It is New-Year’s Day; and I like to have something to give people.”

“Well, you have made me a beautiful present,” replied the lady, smiling; “for I should certainly have lost my veil if it had not been for you. But why may I not make you a little gift in return?”

Lottie still shrunk from taking the money; and, after a moment’s thought, the lady ceased to urge her, and, after inquiring the number of her residence, bade her “Good-morning!” and walked on; while the little girl took up her basket of wood, and hastened to her mother.

Mrs. Wilton listened with delight to her account of the adventures of the morning, and sympathized with her pleasure in having already made three or four New-Year’s gifts.

“And now, mother,” said Lottie, “I will help you to sew; and by and by, if you will give me leave, I will go and read one of my pretty books, that the teacher gave me, to that little sick girl in the next street. Don’t you remember I told you about her? She used to come to sabbath school.”

“Yes, I remember what you told me, Lottie. You may go to see her this afternoon. And now I have a long seam for you to sew.”

“I am glad that I can sew neatly enough to help you, mother,” said Lottie; and in a few moments she was seated at her mother’s side, sewing away as busily as Mrs. Wilton herself.

The afternoon visit to the little sick girl proved a very pleasant one; and Lottie came home with the delightful consciousness that she had done much good, and almost made the little sufferer forget her pain.

“This has been a *happy, happy* day,” she said. “I wish every New-Year’s Day would be like it.”

“*All* days may be much like it, my dear child,” replied her mother, “if you continue to find happiness in doing good to others. You will not again complain that you have ‘nothing to give.’”

“No, indeed, mother; for I have found that even poor people like us have many things to give which make others happy. And you know, mother, I gave something even to that rich lady.”

“You did, indeed, dear,” answered Mrs. Wilton, smiling. “And now go to sleep, and dream of your happy day.”

Lottie’s dreams were very pleasant, you may be sure; and her mother saw her smile many times in her sleep, as if the angels were whispering to her in their words of love.

The next day brought a visit from the lady who had lost the veil. She had not forgotten little Lottie;

and now came to inquire into Mrs. Wilton's circumstances, and to offer her assistance if she was in need. A kind friend she proved to the widow and her child ; and they often thought with thankfulness of the day when Lottie picked up the veil, rejoicing, in her simplicity, that she had *something to give*.

3*

WILLIE'S GOLD DOLLAR.

“SUCH beautiful toys! such beautiful toys!” exclaimed little Willie Duncan, as he clapped his hands, and capered about the room with delight.

It was a bright, frosty, Christmas morning; and Willie had just taken down the stocking, which he had carefully hung in the chimney-corner the evening before, in the hope that some kind friend would play the part of Santa Claus for him.

His hope was not disappointed: for the stocking was found most bountifully filled; and Willie eagerly hastened to examine its contents. It was fortunate that he had borrowed his grandfather's long stocking for the occasion; for his own little sock could never have contained the beautiful, large humming-top, and the pretty Noah's ark, which now met his eyes. And then the large, soft ball, just right for playing in the house in stormy weather; and the nice transparent slate, with which Willie could amuse himself when the older folks wished him to be quiet. All these

things, and many more, were safely packed away in grandpa's great stocking. Papers of candy, stores of nuts and almonds, and pretty little lady-apples, came to light as Willie continued his search; and last of all, in a tiny wooden box, was found a bright gold dollar.

"I am sure grandpa must have put that in himself," said Willie; "for I saw a gold dollar in his desk-drawer yesterday. But oh, mother! did you ever see so many pretty things? Am I not very happy?"

"I hope so, indeed, my dear boy," answered Mrs. Duncan, smiling; "but pretty things do not always make us happy."

"Not unless we are good, you mean, mother. But I will try to be good. Only look at this humming-top!"

"It is a fine one, Willie. Here is a cord. Try if you can spin it."

The top was soon whirling merrily upon the floor, and humming so loudly that Willie had to clap his hands once more; and even baby, who was pillowed up in his crib, unpacking his own wee little stocking, dropped the china pussy-cat, which he had just taken out, and stretched his little hands toward the top, crowing with delight.

But now mother said that both Willie and baby must put by their toys, and be dressed for breakfast; and she gave Willie a basket to put all his new treasures

into, that he might carry them down stairs easily, and exhibit them to his father.

“And what will you buy with the gold dollar, Willie?” asked Mr. Duncan, after he had examined and admired all the pretty gifts.

Willie looked very thoughtful as he replied, “I should like to do some good with it, father. I think I ought to,—do not you?”

“We ought always to try to do good, Willie; but I am not sure that I quite understand what you mean.”

“I heard you say the other day, father, that we should love to share with others the blessings which the Lord gives to us.”

“That is right, my son: I did say something of the kind.”

“Well, father, I have a great many blessings this morning,—all these pretty toys; and so I think I ought to spend the gold dollar for other people.”

“I am glad you think so, Willie. And who would you like to spend it for?”

“If you are willing, father, I should like to give it to lame Georgie to buy a book. He told me, a few days ago, that he wanted very much to buy a book called ‘Rollo at Work,’ because there is a story in it about a lame boy named Georgie, just like him. You know Georgie’s father is poor; and I do not think he can spare the money to buy a book. May I give him my dollar, father?”

“Certainly, Willie: you may take it to him as soon as you have eaten your breakfast.”

Willie's eyes sparkled with delight. His breakfast was quickly eaten, and his warm comforter and mittens put on.

“May I go to the bookstore and buy the book for Georgie, if he wishes me to, mother?” he asked; “and may I stay with him a little while?”

Mrs. Duncan readily granted her permission; for although Georgie's father and mother were poor, yet they were very worthy people, and had taught him to be an obedient, good boy, so that Willie's parents were quite willing that he should sometimes go to play with him.

Willie found Georgie sitting in his usual seat by the fireside, with a small stand placed near him, on which were a little box and a new gimlet.

“O Willie,” he exclaimed joyfully, as Willie entered, “I am so glad you have come! Only see what nice Christmas-gifts I have got! Father bought me this new gimlet; and a kind lady, who comes to see my mother sometimes, sent me this pretty dissected map. I have been playing with it all the morning.”

As Georgie spoke, he opened the box which stood upon the stand, and showed Willie that it contained a map of the world, cut into small pieces, which could all be neatly fitted together. Willie had several maps

of this kind at home ; and he was just going to say that he did not think this was much of a present, and to tell Georgie how many pretty toys he had received, when he remembered that it would not be kind to do so ; and he said, pleasantly,—

“ It is a very pretty map, Georgie : I am glad the lady gave it to you. And what a nice gimlet ! You can bore large holes with this.”

“ Yes,” replied Georgie : “ you know I have a small one ; and I have wanted a large one for a long time. But tell me about your presents, Willie ; for I am sure you have had a great many.”

“ Yes, I have had a good many,” answered Willie ; “ and I have brought one of them to you.”

So saying, Willie took out the little box, which contained the gold dollar, and handed it to Georgie.

“ What a pretty little box !” said Georgie : “ I never saw so small a one in my life. Thank you, Willie !”

“ Open it, Georgie !” exclaimed Willie, laughing : “ it has got your new book in it.”

“ My new book !” said Georgie : “ it must be a very small one, then. O Willie, what a beautiful gold dollar !” he exclaimed, as he took off the cover. “ Do you mean to give all this to me ?”

“ Yes, Georgie : it is to buy the book that you want so much.”

“ You are *very* kind, Willie ! I shall be so happy

to have that book ! I wish I could walk to the bookstore, and I would go for it this minute."

"I can go," replied Willie. "Mother gave me leave ; and, when I come back, we will read the book, Georgie, and I will tell you all about my presents ; for I can stay with you a while."

Georgie was very glad to hear this ; and Willie took the gold dollar, and ran joyfully away.

He very soon returned, with the much-wished-for book in his hand.

"Here it is, Georgie," he said ; and here is a half-dollar in change : that is enough to buy another book, if you wish."

"But I think you ought to keep the half-dollar, Willie. This book is enough for you to give me. I am sure I am very much obliged to you."

"Oh, no, Georgie ! I meant to give you the whole dollar. Shall I run back to the bookstore, and buy another Rollo book ? There are a great many different kinds."

Georgie thought for a moment ; and then he said,—

"No, Willie : I think it would not be right. I have my new map, my gimlet, and this pretty book : I am very happy to have such beautiful presents. And now, if you are so kind as to give me this half-dollar, I should like to buy something to give to some one who is not so happy as I am."

“That is right, Georgie,” said Willie. “Father says we should always be willing to share our blessings with others. But what will you buy, Georgie?”

“There is a little girl in the other part of this house,” replied Georgie, “who has been ill for a long time. Her mother is poor, and cannot buy her many nice things, such as sick people need. I think I should like to buy some nice grapes with the half-dollar, and give them to her for Christmas.”

“Oh, yes, Georgie!” exclaimed Willie. “She will like them, I am sure: for once, when I was ill, my mother bought a bunch of grapes for me; and they tasted so good!”

Georgie's mother now came into the room; and Georgie showed her the book, and asked her if he could buy grapes for the sick girl with the half-dollar. She was quite willing, and said that she was going out for a little while, and would take the money, and buy the grapes.

“And please come home before Willie goes away, mother,” said Georgie; “for I want him to go with me to give Mary the grapes.”

Georgie's mother said she would not stay long; and then she put on her bonnet and shawl, and went away, while the two little boys amused themselves very pleasantly with the new book and the map. Willie also told Georgie about his Christmas-gifts, and

promised to bring the humming-top to show him the next time that he came.

Very soon Georgie's mother came, with a paper containing some beautiful bunches of white grapes; and Georgie took his crutches, which he was obliged to use in walking, and, asking Willie to bring the grapes, he led the way to the part of the house where little Mary and her mother lived.

They found the little sick girl lying upon a small cot-bed. Every thing was very neat and clean about her; and although she looked very pale and sick, yet her countenance was cheerful and pleasant; and she smiled sweetly when she saw the little boys.

"I wish you a merry Christmas, Georgie," she said; "and I am very glad you have come to see me; for I have something so beautiful to show you! Please, mother, bring it to me."

Her mother brought a tumbler containing a pretty little bunch of flowers, and held it close to Mary.

"Only look, Georgie!" continued the little girl, as she stretched out her small, white hand, and gently touched the flowers; "are they not beautiful? The kind doctor who comes to see me sometimes sent them to me for Christmas. They smell so sweet!"

"They are beautiful, Mary," said Georgie. "I am very glad that you have got them; and Willie and I have brought you something for Christmas, too."

As he spoke, he took the paper of grapes from Willie's hands, and gave it to Mary's mother, saying,—

“Will you please to put a bunch upon a plate, and give them to Mary?”

“O Mary! this is just what I have wanted to give you when your mouth is so hot and parched,” exclaimed her mother. “I am sure we thank you very much, Georgie.”

“Willie gave me the money,” replied Georgie. “He gave me a gold dollar to buy a book: but it cost only half a dollar; and so we could buy grapes for Mary.”

“They are *very* nice,” said the little girl, as her mother carefully removed the skin from one of the grapes, and placed it in her mouth. “I thank you, Georgie; and I thank Willie, too: I am glad he came to see me.”

“I will come again, Mary,” said Willie, going up to the bedside: “and I will bring you one of my boxes of guava jelly; for I had two in my Christmas stocking. Sick people can eat guava jelly; and you will like it, I am sure.”

Mary's mother did not like to have the little girl talk long at one time: so Georgie and Willie bade her good-by, and went away; and very soon it was time for Willie to go home.

His mother was much pleased to hear about his visit ; and she said, " Your gold dollar has made several people happy,—has it not Willie ? "

" Yes, mother. It made grandpa happy to give it to me ; and it made me happy to give it to Georgie ; and then Georgie was happy to give the grapes to the little girl ; and she and her mother were both happy to have them. I am glad that my gold dollar has given so many people pleasure, mother."

" And I am glad also, Willie. It is good to love to share with others the blessings which the Lord gives to us."

THE THANKSGIVING PARTY.

“Oh, mother, mother!” exclaimed Lucy Welford, as she bounded into her mother’s room, one bright, frosty morning in November, “Uncle John is in the parlor, and he has come to ask you if he may take Mary and me home with him to pass Thanksgiving. O, please, mother, let us go. Thanksgiving in the country is so delightful, much more so than in the city. Such fine sleigh-rides, and such grand slides on the pond.”

“And the delicious pumpkin pies, and the roast turkeys, and the bowls of sweet milk and cream,” continued Mary, who had followed her sister to hear their mother’s decision. “Oh, it will be so pleasant. And only think, mother, Uncle John is going to have a large party—a regular feast—he says; and Aunt Clara thinks that Lucy and I can assist her very much if you will be so kind as to let us go.”

“Very well,” replied their mother, smiling; “we will go and talk with Uncle John about it, and see if

father thinks he can spare both of his girls for a few days."

To the great joy of Mary and Lucy, father and mother at length gave their consent; and, warmly wrapped in hoods and cloaks, with a large carpet-bag to contain such articles as would be necessary for them during their stay, they sprang lightly into Uncle John's comfortable sleigh, and with many a kind good-by to the dear ones at home, were soon riding swiftly away, leaving far behind the various sights and sounds of the busy city.

A pleasant ride of fifteen miles brought them to the old-fashioned farm house, where the sound of the merry bells soon called Aunt Clara to the door, and with a most affectionate welcome, she embraced her young nieces, and expressed her joy that their parents had consented to spare them to her for a short time.

The ride in the fresh air had given the girls fine rosy cheeks and excellent appetites, and they were quite ready to accept Aunt Clara's invitation to take a luncheon of bread and milk, and some of her nice doughnuts.

"And now, dear aunt, do tell us all about the party," exclaimed Lucy. "Will there be any young folks, or is it only for grown up people like you and Uncle John? We tried to make him tell us about it

as we rode along ; but he only laughed, and said we should find out when the day came."

"There will be both young and old," replied their aunt, smiling, "about fifty in all ; so you see I shall be much in need of your assistance in entertaining so large a company."

"We will do everything we can to help you," said Mary, "and we have brought our new winter frocks to wear, and new ribbons for our hair ; and mother said, if anything else was needed, we could send her word to-morrow, as Uncle John said he should be obliged to go into town."

"Oh, your dress will do very well, I have no doubt," replied her aunt. "Our friends are not very showy people, and will come in plain attire. But I must leave you and Lucy to entertain yourselves for a short time, as a part of my morning work is unfinished. I suppose you will not be at a loss for amusement."

"Not at all," answered both of the girls. "We will go to the barn, and find Uncle John, and see if our old pets among the sheep and the 'cows have forgotten us."

The remainder of the day passed pleasantly away, and the girls were so much fatigued with the unusual exercise they had taken in running about the farm, that they were quite glad when bed-time came, and

slept soundly until the bright rays of the morning sun were beaming in at their window.

“To-morrow will be the day for the party,” exclaimed Luey, as she and her sister hastened to dress for breakfast, fearful that they had already kept their aunt waiting. “I expect to enjoy it so much.”

“So do I,” replied Mary. “I am very glad that there are young people coming. There are some sweet little girls in the neighborhood. I hope Aunt Clara has invited Mrs. Carlton’s family. They live in the great white house on the hill, and are very genteel, pleasant people.”

“No doubt they will be here,” returned Luey, “and the Wilsons and Smiths, and, perhaps, Mr. Marion’s family. There must be many others coming whom we do not know, for aunt said there would be about fifty guests. O, I am sure it will be delightful!”

Breakfast over, Aunt Clara soon found abundance of work for her two young assistants. There were nutmegs to grate, eggs to beat, apples to pare, meat to mince, and various other employments, which the girls found very interesting. The tables were soon loaded with pies, cakes, warm bread, and every variety of eatables, while turkeys and chickens by the dozen were in a state of preparation, and the large pots over the fire were filled with the nice hams which Uncle John had provided for the occasion. Everything showed

that there was to be a bountiful feast, and our young friends danced for joy, as they thought of the pleasure in store for them.

The much wished for day came at length, and a bright and beautiful day it was. The guests were expected to assemble about noon, and by eleven o'clock, Luey and Mary, having assisted their aunt in preparing the long table in the dining-room, hastened to their own apartment to dress, that they might be in readiness to receive them.

The great double sleigh with the pretty gray ponies was already harnessed, for some of the visitors, as Unele John observed, lived at quite a distance from the farm, and he had promised to send for them at the proper time.

"Very kind in Unele John," observed Mary to her sister, "but I should think they would prefer coming in their own carriages."

"But it is so pleasant to load up that old double sleigh," returned Lucy. "The younger part of the company will enjoy the arrangement exceedingly. Just tie this bow for me, Mary, and then, I believe, we are all ready. Let us go down at once. I have no doubt that a part of the company have arrived."

But the parlors were still empty. Even Aunt Clara had not yet appeared, and after surveying themselves with much satisfaction in the large mirror, and impa-

tiently walking up and down the room for a short time, the girls resolved to seek her, and inquire if the appointed dinner hour had not nearly arrived. To their surprise, they found the table already loaded with the smoking plum puddings, and nicely roasted turkeys and chickens, which Uncle John and Aunt Clara were carrying with all possible despatch.

“But no one has come yet, Uncle John,” exclaimed both Lucy and Mary in a breath. “Will not the dinner be cold?”

“Our friends have all arrived,” was their uncle’s quiet reply; and as he spoke, the door leading from the great kitchen was thrown open, and a crowd of persons, young and old, appeared.

There was the honest laborer, who had toiled hard through the year for the support of his large family. There, too, was the cheerful wife and the joyful little ones, and, perhaps, the aged grand-parents, whose feeble steps were supported by their children, as they took their seats at the bountifully spread table. In short, most of the worthy poor in the immediate vicinity of the farm were there assembled, and some few from a greater distance.

Mary and Lucy had not time to recover from their surprise, before all the guests were seated at the table, and Uncle John, rising from his chair, bade them all a kindly welcome, and after explaining in a few words

the origin of Thanksgiving Day, asked them all to unite with him in a prayer of thankfulness to the Lord, from whom every mercy is received.

Each guest was then plentifully supplied with the good things upon the table, and Aunt Clara requested her nieces to attend particularly to the little children, and see that all their wants were cared for.

A happier party was seldom seen. After dinner, presents of food and clothing were distributed among them, and Mary and Lucy found great satisfaction in dressing the children in new clothes, and seeing the gratitude and joy in their smiling little faces.

After an hour or two spent in this manner, the great sleigh and the gray horses came merrily jingling to the door, and the old people and the children were safely conveyed to their homes, and the rest of the party, with many thanks and blessings to their kind entertainers, took their leave.

"Well, girls, how did you enjoy my party?" exclaimed Uncle John, as he reëntered the parlor, after bidding farewell to the last of his guests.

"O, very much indeed," was the reply. "It was very different from what we expected, but still we enjoyed it very much. It is so pleasant to make others happy."

"It is, indeed, my children," returned Uncle John, "and it appears to me that on a day like this, it is the

duty of all those whom the Lord has blessed with abundance, to seek out the needy and afflicted, and endeavor to relieve their wants."

When the harvest is gathered in, and the farmer beholds his table loaded with the rich fruits of the year, he should call upon the aged, the poor, and the helpless to come in with him and share his feast.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

“HAVE you recollected that this is the first day of winter, Mary?” asked Isabel Gordon as she came into the room where her younger sister was seated with her atlas spread before her, busily engaged in preparing her lessons for the next day.

“I have not thought of it before,” replied Mary, quietly.

“But now you do think of it, Mary, do you remember what we agreed to do on this day? Christmas will soon be here now, you know.”

“In little more than three weeks. Yes, Isabel, I know what you are thinking of. We agreed to open our banks to-day, and see how much we have saved to spend for Christmas gifts.”

“Yes, that is it,” replied Isabel, joyfully. “I am so glad that we can open them at last. I want to know how much we have saved. Shall I bring them now?”

“If you please. I have just finished learning my geography lesson.”

Isabel ran to the closet, and quickly returned with two money-boxes, or banks, in her hand. She gave one to her sister, and taking the other herself, they both succeeded, without much difficulty, in making an opening so that they could get at the treasure within. For nearly a year the little girls had saved almost every penny which had been given them, that they might have the pleasure of giving as well as receiving the pretty holiday gifts.

“Well, Mary, how much have you?” asked Isabel, as she finished counting the pile of pennies, sixpences, and shillings which lay before her.

“Four dollars and a few pennies,” answered Mary. “I did not think I had so much.”

“And I have a little more than *five* dollars,” said Isabel, triumphantly. “You know I saved the gold dollar which grandfather gave me, and you did not. Are you not sorry that you spent it?”

“Not at all, Isabel. That dollar has done more good in the last two months than it would have done lying in our little banks. You know I bought a nice pair of shoes and some stockings for Susan Green, that she might attend the sabbath school. Her teacher says she is learning very fast, and is one of the best children in her class.”

“Well, never mind that now, Mary. Let us talk about the best way to spend our money. What will

you buy for father and mother? I am going to work a pair of slippers for father, and I shall buy a pretty worked collar for mother. I heard her say the other day that she needed some new collars."

"Have you time to embroider a pair of slippers?" asked Mary.

"Oh yes! Ellen Shaw taught me a new way. I shall buy the slippers ready made, and then embroider them with gold thread. They will cost me about a dollar, and mother's collar will be nearly two. Then I must buy a present for Betsey; a new apron will please her, I think, and will not cost too much. I have a nice plan for spending the remainder of the money; but first let me hear what you are going to do with yours."

"I shall buy a handsome inkstand for father's desk. You know he broke his large one the other day, and is using an old one of mother's now. I will try to get one just like that which he broke. For mother I will buy a beautiful rose-bush to put upon her flower-stand. For Betsey I shall have a nice warm hood. I am to buy the materials, and mother has promised to help me make it. There will still be as much as a dollar and a half remaining, and mother says that if this is expended prudently it will do a great deal of good. I have not quite decided what to do with it, but I think I shall make a nice warm coverlet for that poor old

man and his wife whom we went to see last week. I heard the old woman telling mother that she often suffered dreadfully with rheumatism during the winter ; and when I looked around and saw what a miserable shanty they have to shelter them, I could hardly keep from weeping."

"But I dare say that some one else will give them a coverlet," replied Isabel, with a look of disappointment, "and I want you to put your money with mine, and buy a pretty present for our teacher. We can get a very pretty work-box for three dollars, and I am sure she would be very much pleased."

Mary was silent for a few minutes. She loved her teacher very much, and thought it would be very pleasant to make her a present ; but then the remembrance of the poor old couple in the wretched shanty came strongly to her mind, and she said, decidedly, "No, Isabel, I cannot do it. I should be very glad to make Miss Spencer a present, and perhaps mother will show me how to make a needle-book for her, but the poor people need a coverlet more than she needs a work-box."

"That is no rule, Mary. We cannot always give to those who need it the most. All of the girls are going to call at Miss Spencer's house on Christmas morning, and each one will take her a little gift. If you will only join with me, our present will be

prettier and more valuable than any other she will receive."

"I do not care about that, Isabel. Miss Spencer will not value the gifts for the sake of what they cost. She will be pleased to find that we think of her and love her. But I am sure she would rather I would spend my money in doing good. You know we both agreed to save a part for the poor."

"I know we did, but some other time will do as well as Christmas," replied Isabel. "If you will not help me to buy the work-box, I will buy it myself, and not spend so much on my other presents. I saw a beauty for three dollars, the other day, and I am determined to have one like it."

"Father says that we ought to try to do all the good we can upon Christmas day," answered Mary, gently. "You know it is the anniversary of the day when the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, that He might do more good to men; and if we love to do as He teaches us, we shall be willing to give up our own pleasure for the sake of helping others."

Isabel felt that she was in the wrong, but she was not willing to acknowledge it, and therefore replied rather crossly that Mary could do as she pleased, but she had no idea of spending her money in Christmas gifts for the poor.

The girls therefore said no more to each other upon

the subject. They were both very busy in their preparations for Christmas, however, and long before the important day arrived everything was in readiness. The work-box for her teacher had taken so large a portion of Isabel's money, that her gifts for her other friends were necessarily trifling, but she did not regret this when she thought how pleased Miss Spenceer would be with so valuable a present, and how astonished her young companions would appear at her generosity.

Mary had, with the advice of her mother, expended the part of her money which she had set apart for the poor, so judiciously, that it went much farther than she had anticipated. Some partly worn dresses served for the outside of the coverlet, and with the money thus saved, many other comfortable things were procured. The happy little girl danced for joy when all was completed, and she thought how much good even her small hands could do.

The day before Christmas arrived; and a merry group of girls had assembled at an early hour in Miss Spenceer's pleasant school-room, to talk over their plans for the holidays.

"And now, girls, let us arrange at what hour we will call on Miss Spencer, to wish her a merry Christmas, and present our little gifts," exclaimed Caroline Elwyn, one of the oldest of the scholars. "I propose that we should all meet at the great oak tree, at ten

o'clock to-morrow morning, and then we can go together. Only you must be sure to be punctual, for the weather is rather too cold to make it very agreeable to wait for each other."

All of the girls readily agreed to this plan, and then followed an animated discussion as to the beauty and value of their separate gifts. One had prepared a work-bag, another a needle-book, a third had worked a collar, a fourth a pin-cushion.

"And now, tell us what your present is to be, Isabel," said Caroline Elwyn. "You are so wonderfully silent about it, that we suspect it must be something far surpassing our humble offerings. You shake your head. Well, we will not urge you. Cannot you enlighten us, Mary?"

"I can only tell you what my own gift is to be," was the smiling reply. "I have made a pen-wiper to lie upon her desk."

"We shall soon discover Isabel's secret," exclaimed another of the girls. "Only a few hours, now, before the happy time will be here. I wish it were night. Time passes so quickly when we are sleeping."

The merry laugh which this remark occasioned had hardly subsided, when their teacher entered the room. She greeted them with her usual affectionate good morning, and pleasantly remarked that they must study with unusual diligence that day, as the holidays were so near.

The girls cheerfully took their books, and, in spite of their joyful anticipations for the coming weeks, their lessons were well learned and recited.

Toward the close of the afternoon session, Miss Spencer requested them to put away their books, as she had something to say to them before she closed the school.

When everything was arranged in an orderly manner, she told them that it had been her custom for several years to visit the poor families in the neighborhood on Christmas day, and endeavor to do what she could for their comfort. She said that she hoped that all of her scholars had thought of the poor in preparing their Christmas gifts, and had remembered that though it was very pleasant and proper to present tokens of affection to their friends, yet it was better still to relieve those who were in need.

Mary looked at her teacher while she was speaking, with such a bright, animated expression, that Miss Spencer could not help remarking it, and said, kindly,

“Have you thought of this in your preparations for Christmas, Mary?”

“I have tried to do what I could, ma’am,” was the modest reply.

“I had thought of proposing that some of my scholars should accompany me in my visits to the poor to-morrow,” continued Miss Spencer. “There is one

old couple in particular whom I am very anxious to assist, as they are exceedingly destitute. They live in that miserable shanty at the foot of the hill. How many of you are willing to aid me in this good work, provided your parents consent?"

Almost every hand was raised, and then each spoke in turn. One had saved a dollar for the use of the poor, and would give any part of it which her teacher thought best. Another had a half dollar, another a quarter, and three pretty little girls said they each had a bright dime, which mother had given them to spend for the poor. Mary had no money, but she told of the warm coverlet and some comfortable flannels which she had prepared for the very couple whom her teacher wished to assist.

"We shall make their home a happy one to-morrow," said Miss Spencer. "I have two dollars of my own to give them, and I have also prepared a basket of food suitable for their Christmas dinner. But I think you have not yet spoken, Isabel. Have you nothing to give? I believe you told me that you had saved five dollars for Christmas gifts. A part of this would be well disposed in relieving these poor sufferers."

Isabel blushed deeply, as she said, in a low tone, that she had already spent her money.

It was then arranged that the girls should meet at

their teacher's house the next morning, bringing with them whatever their parents were willing that they should bestow in charity. Miss Spencer did not know that they had already agreed to meet there to present the gifts which they had prepared for herself, and the girls were quite pleased to think how surprised she would be when she discovered this little secret.

Among all the merry group which left the school-house, Isabel alone was sad and uncomfortable.

"I do not know why I should feel so badly," she said to herself. "I have done nothing wrong. I have not been selfish, for I have spent every penny of my money in preparing gifts for others."

But Isabel had not yet learned to examine her motives strictly. She did not reflect that the greater part of her money had been expended for gifts which it would gratify her vanity and pride to present. The box which she had purchased for her teacher was bought for the very purpose of outshining her companions. She did not love Miss Spencer any better than the other scholars, but she wished to make a display of generosity and affection which would astonish them all.

Miss Spencer had frequently noticed this defect in Isabel's character, and when she found that none of the money which she had boasted of having saved was reserved for charitable purposes, she felt grieved, and

calling Isabel to her as the other scholars left the room, she passed her arm around her, and said, gently, "I am sorry that you cannot aid us in our good work, Isabel."

"I am sorry, too, Miss Spencer, but I have spent all my money in preparing gifts for my friends."

"We should never forget the poor, Isabel. Would not less valuable gifts have expressed equal affection for those you love, and then there would have been some remaining for those who need it more."

Isabel made no reply, but she looked sad and mortified as she bade her teacher good afternoon. And yet her pride was not subdued; for when Mary kindly offered to share with her the articles which she had prepared for the poor, she answered, haughtily, that she could easily have bought these things if she had chosen to do so.

Christmas morning was bright and beautiful, and very mild for the season. With happy hearts and faces the little girls met around the old oak tree, and after telling each other of the pretty gifts they had received, and displaying those which they had brought for their teacher, they all proceeded to Miss Spencer's house.

Now was the time for Isabel's expected triumph. With glowing cheeks and a self-satisfied air she presented her present; but the murmur of admiration which she had anticipated was not heard.

Miss Spencer thanked her, and said it was a very pretty box ; but she seemed quite as well pleased with some of the most trifling articles which were given her. She particularly commended the neatness and good taste which Mary had shown in making the pen-wiper. Indeed, she seemed more delighted with even the most simple gifts which the scholars had made themselves, than with far more costly ones which had been purchased for her.

As for the scholars, they were so much occupied with examining what they had brought for the poor, that they could give but a passing glance of admiration at the work-box.

As Isabel had nothing to give she did not wish to accompany the happy party, and therefore returned immediately home. Her mother found her in her own room weeping bitterly, and gently drew from her the cause of her grief.

“This may be a useful lesson to you, dear Isabel,” she said. “It will teach you that no real happiness is ever derived from a selfish act. Your motive in presenting a more expensive gift to your teacher than the rest of your companions were prepared to do, was selfish. You expected to receive praise and admiration. In this you were disappointed, and therefore you are unhappy. Another time I trust you will do better. In expending your money for Christmas gifts, you will

remember those who need it most, and will gladly give, hoping for nothing again."

Isabel still wept, but less violently than before, and when Mary entered with a beaming countenance, and told her mother of the gratitude and joy of the poor people whom they had visited, Isabel put her arm around her neck and asked her forgiveness for her ill humor, and promised that when another Christmas came, she too would remember *those who need it most*.

APRIL FOOL'S DAY.

“WHAT new experiment are you trying, my son?” asked Mr. Willard, as he entered his pleasant parlor late in the afternoon of a day in early spring, unperceived by his little son Arthur, who was busily employed in tying up several small packages which lay on the table before him.

Arthur looked up at his father with a bright smile; for Mr. Willard always took a great interest in the amusements of his children, and they were in the habit of consulting him and asking his assistance in many of their sports.

“Don’t tell Willie and Jane, father,” said Arthur, “and I will tell you all about it. You know to-morrow will be the first day of April, and I expect to have a fine time playing tricks upon people. There is nothing in these parcels but little chips and stones. I shall put one of them upon Jane’s table after she is asleep to-night; and she will be sure to open it the first thing in the morning. I expect she will think

that Unele Samuel or Aunt Mary were here in the evening, and brought her a nice little present. Then I shall drop another package where Willie will find it when he goes to feed his chickens. What a hurry he will be in to pick it up !

“And, father,” continued Arthur, “you do not know what a nice joke I shall play upon Susan ! Sometimes, when I get up early in the morning, and she is in a hurry getting breakfast, I go to Mr. Conant’s for the milk. Now, to-morrow morning I mean to be up very early, before Susan leaves her room. Then I will take the milk-pail, and put a quart of water into it, and set it in the place where I usually put it when I bring the milk. When Susan comes into the kitchen, she will see the pail on the table, and, finding it heavy, will suppose I have been for the milk. So she will say, ‘O, Arthur ! you are a good boy to bring my milk ;’ and then she will take off the cover to pour it into the pitcher. How I shall laugh at her when she finds it is water !”

Mr. Willard smiled a little as Arthur clapped his hands at the thought of Susan’s vexation : but in a moment he looked grave, and, seating himself in his rocking-chair, he drew his little son close to his side, and said, kindly,—

“Do the angels try to make people happy or unhappy, Arthur ?”

“Happy, father,” replied the boy, looking wonderingly in his father’s face.

“Then you are not trying to do like the angels,—are you, Arthur. You mean to vex people, and make them unhappy.”

Arthur blushed, and looked very thoughtful; and his father continued,—

“Jane and Willie and Susan will all feel somewhat vexed and displeased at your jokes,—will they not, my son?”

“Yes, sir, I suppose they will,” answered Arthur; “but, then, I want to have a little fun on April Fool’s Day.”

“It is poor fun to make others unhappy. I have no objection to your playing jokes or tricks, as you call them, upon your brother and sister and Susan; but I should like to have you think of something which would please them, instead of making them vexed.”

“But, father, I cannot think of any tricks of that kind.”

“I will help you a little, Arthur, and then you will understand what I mean. We will take the trick which you intended to play upon Susan, for instance. Now, if, instead of putting water in the pail, and deceiving her by making her think it is milk, you should rise early, and really bring her the milk, you might still have a pleasant joke by putting the pail in

the place where it usually stands when it is empty, instead of on the table where you leave it when it is filled. Then Susan will be greatly surprised when she takes it up, intending to go for the milk."

Arthur's face grew very bright again.

"Oh, yes, father! I shall like that plan very much: it is much better than my own. And how shall I manage about Willie and Jane?"

"Try to think of some way yourself, Arthur. Only remember to have your joke of a kind that will give pleasure, and not pain."

"I know of a grand trick to play upon Jane, father, if you will let me run to the shop and spend my bright half-dollar that my grandfather gave me. Jane has a hole in her thimble, and she pricked her finger sadly to-day. Now, I can buy a nice new thimble for her, and take her old one from her work-basket, and put the new one in its place. How surprised she will be! May I do this, father?"

"If you feel willing to spend your money for your sister, I shall be glad to have you do so, Arthur."

"I am willing, father. And now for Willie; what shall I do for him? I think I must drop a little parcel where he will pick it up, father; but I will not put sticks and stones in it. I have some nice candies in my pocket, which a boy at school gave me. Willie does not know that I have them; and I will put them

into his paper. How he will wonder where they came from !”

Mr. Willard felt much pleased to see how readily Arthur followed his advice ; and the little boy himself felt far happier now that his plans for the jokes of the next day were all of a kind to make others happy.

The thimble was bought ; the package of candy tied up, and carefully placed where Willie would be sure to find it. Every thing succeeded quite to Arthur's satisfaction. He awoke very early, and, stealing softly from the house, brought the milk, and replaced the pail in the closet.

Susan came out of her room somewhat later than usual, and hurried around, fearful that her breakfast would not be ready at the appointed hour. She did not observe Arthur, who had seated himself where he thought he should be unnoticed, that he might enjoy her surprise. He came very near laughing aloud when he heard Susan exclaim, as she hastily tied on her bonnet and ran to the closet,—

“ Oh, dear, I must go for the milk ! I was so in hopes that Arthur would have got it for me this morning !”

Arthur held his hand tightly over his mouth ; but when he saw Susan lift the pail up suddenly, and then quickly take off the cover to see what made it so heavy,

he could no longer keep quiet, but with a merry laugh bounded from his hiding-place, exclaiming, —

“Now, Susan, didn't I tell you I would play a trick on you to-day?”

Susan smiled pleasantly, and said she did not care how many tricks he played on her if they were all as good as that.

Next came Willie, full of wonder at the contents of the package which he had found in the box where he kept the corn for his chickens.

“Only think, Arthur,” said he; “the door of the chicken-house was locked, so no one could have got in last night, and yet I feel sure that this was not there when I fed the chickens at supper-time. Such nice candy! Do you think it will be right for us to eat it, or must we try to find out to whom it belongs?”

There was such a roguish look on Arthur's face, as he replied that he thought there would be no harm in eating it, that Willie began to understand the joke; and, well pleased, he divided the candy with his brother and sister.

But Arthur felt still more pleased when little Jane took up her work-basket with a sigh, saying, —

“I will try to hem the handkerchief you wish me to, mother; but my thimble has such a great hole in it, that the head of my needle pricks my finger every few minutes.”

What a joyful surprise,—to find the old thimble missing, and a bright new one in its place ! It would have been hard to tell which felt the most pleased, Jane or Arthur. Both were delighted ; and we are very sure that Arthur did not once regret that he had spent his half-dollar for his sister's pleasure.

When evening came, and Mr. Willard was at leisure to sit down with his children, Arthur had many funny stories to tell of the pleasant jokes which he had played through the day.

Charley Mason, one of his schoolmates, had torn a large hole in his kite when they were flying it at recess. At noon, he hurried home for his dinner ; intending, if possible, to return in season to mend the kite, and have another play, before school commenced in the afternoon. Arthur, having brought his dinner with him in the morning, was not obliged to return home ; and he carefully mended the kite while Charley was absent.

“ It was such fun to see him turn it over and over, and look for the hole ! ” continued Arthur, as he told the story to his father ; “ and Johnny Gardiner looked almost as funny when he found a long slate-pencil in his desk, which I had slyly slipped in, just as he had made up his mind to go and tell the teacher the old story,—that he had no pencil. Johnny does not like

to tell Miss Grant that very well, for he is famous for losing his pencil.

“And, father, I played a nice joke on Miss Grant. She thought I could not learn so long a lesson in geography as she had given to the rest of the class, because I am younger than the others, and have never been through the book before. So she told me to take half of the lesson; but I studied hard, and learned the whole. When we were reciting, she stopped when she had heard about half, and said, ‘You may take your seat now, Arthur.’

“‘Thank you, ma’am,’ I answered; ‘but I can say it all.’

“Then she looked surprised, and said I must have worked very hard.

“But, father, that book is too hard for me; and Miss Grant told me to ask you to buy one more suitable. I wish you would, father: I love to study geography. Henry Williams has such a beauty! all full of pictures. Oh, how I should like one like that!”

“We must think about it,” replied Mr. Willard. “And now, Arthur, I must attend to some writing for a little while, and you may look over your lessons for to-morrow.”

“Yes, father, my geography: I always have to study that in the evening.” And, with a little sigh, Arthur went for his satchel of books. But it was now

his turn to find a pleasant joke ; for the old geography had been taken from the bag, and in its place was one exactly like the "beauty" owned by Henry Williams, upon the blank leaf of which was written, "Arthur Willard ; from his father, April first, eighteen hundred fifty-six."

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE.

“OH, dear, it is almost Christmas!” exclaimed Mary Bradley with a deep sigh, which caused her younger brother Horace to look up from his book with surprise.

“Why do you sigh about it, Mary?” he asked. “Are you not glad that Christmas is coming?”

“I *should* be glad, Horace,” replied his sister in a melancholy tone, “if things were as they used to be. What beautiful gifts we had last year! But father was rich then; and now he is poor.” And again Mary sighed deeply.

“I do not think father is very poor,” replied Horace, laughing. “I am sure we have all we want,—a good house to live in, plenty of food and clothing, a warm fire, and many kind friends. Do you call that being poor, sister Mary? You ought to see the poor wretches that I meet sometimes on my way to school.”

“How foolishly you talk, Henry!” answered his sister, rather petulantly. “You know very well what

I mean. Of course, we are not street beggars ; but we live very differently from what we did last year at this time. Our beautiful house, our horses and carriage, and nearly all of our servants, are gone."

"No matter for that," returned Master Horace. "Father has paid all his debts like an honest man, and we have all we need. A small house is just as comfortable as a large one ; the cars and omnibuses answer as good a purpose as our own carriage ; and as to the servants, I much prefer waiting upon myself. As long as I have good Mrs. Betty to cook my dinner, it is all I want."

"It is of no use talking to you, Horace," answered his sister, as she rose to leave the room ; "but, when you see what a bare Christmas-tree we shall have this year, you will be convinced that we are poor."

"We had more than we knew what to do with last year," persisted Horace, following his sister. "Suppose we hunt up about half a bushel of books and toys, and present them to Santa Claus for distribution. No doubt he will be grateful to us ; for times are hard, and his purse may be poorly filled."

"What nonsense !" exclaimed Mary, impatiently. "I will not stay talking with you any longer."

But, at this moment, the pleasant voice of their mother was heard calling them from the adjoining room.

She had heard their conversation, and now replied to Horace's suggestion, —

“Your plan is an excellent one, my son ; and I will try to put it in a form that will be less displeasing to your sister.”

“Horace talks *so much nonsense!*” said Maury, as she took an offered seat by her mother's side.

“A *little* nonsense, but a good deal of sense, my daughter,” returned her mother. “Your mind is in a disturbed and unhappy state, and therefore you are not ready to meet his pleasant way of treating our troubles.”

Although Mary indulged in occasional fits of ill humor and selfish repining, she was really a sensible and very affectionate little girl. She loved her mother very dearly, and felt sad and mortified that she should have added in the least degree to her trials. In a few moments, therefore, she looked up with a cheerful smile, and said, “I will try to do better, mother. I know we have every comfort that we need. It was only the thought of the Christmas-tree that made me unhappy. But I will try not to think of it any more.”

“Think of it in a different way, my dear Mary. Our Christmas-tree will, I doubt not, be well filled, though with less costly gifts than you have hitherto received. But how many there are who have no

Christmas-tree !—how many who will even want for food and clothing on that happy day !”

Mary's eyes filled with tears, but she made no reply ; and her mother proceeded,—

“ When the Lord, in his divine providence, permits us to meet with such trials as he sees to be for our good, we must not harden our hearts. We will not look back with regret upon the luxuries we have lost : but we will rejoice in the comforts remaining ; and we will endeavor, as far as possible, to share those comforts with others more needy than ourselves. The proposal which Horace made in regard to your old books and playthings is a very good one. There are many children who may be made happy with what you now consider useless. Collect every thing which you feel willing to part with, and I will add some articles of clothing. Betty can tell us of several poor families who will be thankful for a portion of our abundance.”

“ I will go and look over our things at once !” exclaimed Mary. “ I have no doubt we can spare a great many. Come, Horace !” And, for the next few hours, the brother and sister were busily engaged, not in useless regrets concerning their own Christmas-tree, but in active efforts to prepare gifts to adorn the trees of children far more destitute than themselves.

Betty, having been made their confidante on the

occasion, took much interest in hunting up destitute families who were deserving of assistance ; and Mary and Horace soon found that there would be no difficulty in disposing of their little stock. Long before the important day arrived, the gifts at their disposal were done up in neat packages, and duly marked with the names of those for whom they were designed. Mrs. Bradley had added an ample supply of partly worn clothing ; and Mr. Bradley, when he found what was going on, had promised to provide some articles of food to distribute among those who were most in want.

Mary and Horace were to have the pleasure of presenting these gifts themselves ; and they were now eagerly longing for the happy day, not for the sake of what they would themselves receive, but that they might have the happiness of imparting their blessings to others.

Christmas Eve came at last : and, attended by Betty, the children left their little parcels at their various destinations ; and then, with their hearts warmed and cheered by the grateful words and smiles which they had received, they turned their steps toward home, that they might enjoy the pleasant sight of their own Christmas-tree, which they rightly concluded would be brilliantly lighted up during their absence.

As they turned the corner near their own home,

they met a pale-faced, thinly clad little boy, with a small branch of evergreen in his hand, which he was carrying carefully along, as if he considered it a precious treasure.

"Is that your Christmas-tree, little boy?" asked Horace, as they drew near to him.

"I found it!" exclaimed the child, joyfully. "I am so glad! Now Susy and I can have a Christmas-tree!" And he was hurrying along; but Horace stopped him by saying,—

"Have you any thing to put on the tree, little boy?"

"Not much," was the reply. "But Susy and I have each got a penny: that will buy something."

"Who is Susy?" asked Mary, as the little fellow was again hastening on his way.

"My little sister, miss. She will be so glad that I have got the tree! I must go to her."

"Come with us first," returned Mary, "and we will give you something to hang on the tree. I have a little doll for Susy, and some candles to light up the tree."

The little pale face looked bright and almost rosy now as he trudged along with the children, still holding fast to his precious tree.

It did not take many moments to fill a small basket with what appeared to the child great treasures; and his eyes sparkled with joy as a warm cape was placed

upon his shoulders, and a cap, long since outgrown by Horace, upon his head. Finding, upon inquiry, that his mother was a poor widow, residing in their immediate neighborhood, Mrs. Bradley directed Betty to fill another basket with food, and accompany the child home. Mary and Horace begged leave to go with her, although they had not as yet given one glance at their own Christmas-tree.

It was a pleasant sight to look at little Susy, as her brother eagerly displayed his treasures to her admiring gaze ; and it was even more gratifying to witness the gratitude of the mother, as Betty emptied the contents of her basket.

After assisting in planting the branch of evergreen in a broken flower-pot which the children produced for the purpose, Mary and Horace took leave, and joyfully returned to their home.

Their Christmas-tree was indeed radiant with light. It seemed to the happy children that it had never been so brilliant before ; for their hearts were filled with the delight of doing good to others, and this made all seem bright around them.

Morning found the tree well loaded with fruit,—pretty and useful gifts, which the children were delighted to receive. It was indeed a happy Christmas. They felt that they were surrounded with blessings ; and, above all, they rejoiced in the happiness of sharing these blessings with others.

A DREAM.

It was Christmas Eve ; the brilliantly-lighted streets were thronged with happy faces, and the merry hum of children's voices seemed to rise above all other sounds in the busy crowd. Our own young folks had gone to rest with their little hearts filled with joyous expectations for the morrow. The stockings, hung by the chimney corner, had already been duly visited by the representatives of Santa Claus, and fatigued with the labors of the day, we would gladly have sought repose, when a gentle ring at the bell attracted our attention, and directly after, our maid of all work entered, and asked if we had any thing to give to a poor child who was standing at our door.

“Poor thing !” we exclaimed involuntarily. “It is hard to think that any child is begging from door to door, on Christmas Eve, when our own darlings are so happy.”

“Tell the child to step in,” was the direction to

Jenny, and in a few moments a modest-looking little girl stood before us. Her slender form was but scantily protected from the cold ; and her countenance showed that she was indeed in need of the assistance which she craved.

Her tale was a simple one. Her mother was very poor, and there were five children, of whom she was the eldest.

We inquired for the father, and her blue eyes were fixed upon the ground, as she answered timidly, that he was at home, but he was often sick, and did not do much for their support. A few more questions convinced us that he was a victim to that fatal evil which destroys the happiness of so many homes.

Our means would not allow us to do much for the poor child, but the little that we had to give was given cheerfully, and with many thanks she bade us good evening. As she left the room I recalled her, and placing a small piece of silver in her hands, I said :

“ You may have this for yourself. I give it to you for a Christmas gift.”

“ And may I spend it for what I please ? ” she asked, her whole face brightening with pleasure.

“ Certainly. What will you buy ? ”

“ O, a great many things ! A present for mother and each of my brothers and sisters, and one for poor father too.”

“But, my child, you have not money enough to buy something for each one.”

“O yes, ma’am, a great plenty! I will buy a nice spool of cotton for mother, she needs one very much, and a penny book for Mary, a whistle for Johnny, a cake for Thomas, and a stick of candy for the baby. Then there will be four cents to spend for father, and I will go to the cheap bookstore, and ask them to sell me some good book, which will teach him not to drink rum any more. He is very, very kind when he is sober.”

“And will you come and see me again next week, and tell me how they liked their presents?” I asked, much interested by the simple, disinterested manner of the child.

“Thank you, ma’am, I will gladly do so,” was the reply, and with another grateful good-evening, she departed.

This little incident gave rise to a train of sad reflections. Happiness, it appeared to me, was unequally distributed. Even at this most joyous season of the year, how few sunbeams found their way to the homes of the poor. Indeed, their burdens must seem more heavy to bear, when contrasted with the luxury and gayety of the wealthy. They gazed upon their ill-fed, half naked little ones, while the children of their more prosperous neighbor passed their door loaded with

useless toys, the price of which would have seemed to them a little mine of wealth. Oppressed with these thoughts, I laid my head upon my pillow, and was soon in the land of dreams.

Strange visions flitted before me. At one time I seemed to be revelling in the luxurious mansions of the rich, and then, by some sudden and mysterious transformation, the extreme of want was my portion. Suddenly a lovely being stood before me, whose very presence seemed to fill my soul with joy. Taking my hand in hers, she said, "Come with me, and I will show thee that this joyous season of the year may bring happiness to the homes of the poor, as well as to those of the wealthy. I am the Spirit of Happiuess, and in the most humble abode on earth I often find a dwelling-place." Joyfully I yielded to 'her guidance, and together we seemed to traverse the busy streets of the city. At one of the most splendid of the brilliantly-illuminated mansions we paused, and in another moment had gained admittance, and, apparently unseen ourselves, surveyed the happy party within. Young men and mailens were gliding through the graceful figures of the merry dance, lovely children were sporting around, joyfully displaying the Christmas gifts of parents and friends; while a less active, but no less happy looking group, were seated in a distant part of the room, gazing with quiet pleasure upon

their children and grandchildren, who at this cheerful season had gathered around them. Every thing around gave evidence of luxury and splendor, and turning to my companion, I exclaimed almost in a tone of upbraiding :

“ Yes, here indeed is happiness. The New Year is to them a time for rejoicing, and ‘ Merry Christmas ’ a day of joyful expectations and realities ; but it is not thus with the poor. The words merriment and joy would seem to them a mockery.”

“ Not so, my friend,” replied my guide. “ The happiness which you see before you is capable of extension. These are the mediums of the blessings of Him whose birth into this natural world they now celebrate. The day which proclaimed peace and good will upon earth, is well calculated to remind these stewards of the Lord, that the wealth intrusted to their charge is not for themselves alone. Behold that venerable old man. He is the grandfather of this little flock. Every year he distributes large sums among the poor, making his grandchildren and great grandchildren his almoners. The happiness which you see in the countenances of the youth and maidens, the innocent glee of the children, is in a great measure caused by the joy which they have this day dispensed among the needy. Merely selfish gratification would not produce genuine contentment and joy. All selfish delights are evanescent and changeable.”

The scene changed, and we stood in a meanly-furnished apartment of one of the most humble dwellings in a narrow street of the city. A father, mother, and five children, were just seated to partake of their frugal meal. Every thing around told of poverty, but the countenances of the parents beamed with contentment, and the bright eyes of the children shone with joy. In the short but fervent prayer which the father uttered ere they commenced eating, gratitude was expressed to heaven for the blessings which this most joyful season of the year had brought to them.

“For what are they thus grateful?” I inquired. “Contrast their situation with that of the happy party whom we have just left.”

“And yet they are not less happy,” was the reply. “Listen to the joyful exclamations of the children.”

I listened, and the words of the little ones soon convinced me that my guide was right. Their hearts seemed overflowing with joy. The gifts which Christmas had brought to them and their parents were, mostly, substantial articles of food and clothing; but there was one small package of toys which had lost the charm of novelty for the children of some wealthy neighbor, and which, though no longer new and glittering, were whole and good. In the eyes of the poor children they were of inestimable value, and they gathered around them with so much delight, that I doubted

not that they derived more pleasure from them than the original possessors had ever done.

Again the scene changed, and we stood in a miserable hovel, where sat a poor mother, with three little children clinging to her side, and rending her heart with their cries for bread. No fire was on the hearth, and the whole scene was one of extreme poverty and desolation.

“Surely there is no happiness here,” I whispered.

“Christmas will bring them at least one ray,” replied my guide; and even as she spoke, a load of wood and coal stopped at their door, and a man entered to inform them that he had orders to supply them with fuel, and desired to know where it should be put. While the grateful woman was yet uttering heartfelt expressions of thankfulness, a lad entered with a large basket of provisions, which he placed upon the table, at the same time slipping a bank note of trifling value into her hand, saying gayly,—

“Here is a merry Christmas to you, my good woman.”

Tears streamed from the eyes of the mother, while the hungry little ones clustered around the basket, and were soon bountifully supplied with a portion of its contents.

Deeply interested in this affecting little scene, I had nearly forgotten the presence of my companion, when a gentle whisper aroused me.

“Would you see the effects of your own Christmas gift?” and scarcely had I signified my assent, when we stood in another humble dwelling, where I recognized the little girl to whom I had given the shilling, surrounded by her family. They had apparently just received their gifts, for the mother was smiling through her tears, as she looked at the spool of cotton which lay on her lap; and Mary, and Johnny, and Thomas, and the baby were all in the enjoyment of the book, the whistle, the cake, and the candy: while the elder sister stood gazing on the happy little group, herself the happiest of them all, and joining heartily in the blessings which they heaped upon the good lady who had given her the shilling. In the corner of the room sat the father, and in his hand was the book which had been purchased at the cheap bookstore with the four cents. I saw at once that it was a Testament. He had not yet opened it, but sat looking at his wife and children with a subdued, mournful expression of countenance, which awakened a strong conviction that there was yet a chance for his reformation.

At length little Mary approached him timidly, and said:

“Look at the book sister bought for me, father; it is not so large as yours. May I look at yours?”

“Yes, Mary, you may read to me from it, if you like; my head aches, and I cannot read myself.”

The noisy mirth of the children was hushed, while the child read from the Book of Life. Some of the passages were singularly appropriate, and tears rolled down the cheeks of the unhappy man as he listened. As she paused at the close of the chapter, the elder girl drew to his side and whispered,—

“Will you not pray with us, as you used to do long ago, dear father?”

As if impelled by an irresistible power, he complied. Prayer and praise had long been strangers to his lips, but now his petitions were fervent, his confessions of past error full, and expressive of deep humility.

As they rose from their knees, the eyes of the husband and wife met, and they fell into each others arms.

One long, earnest embrace, and then the father clasped his children to his bosom.

“With the help of God, I will no longer be unworthy of you,” he exclaimed. “This precious little Christmas gift shall be my guide, and in obedience to its precepts we shall yet find happiness.”

I uttered a joyful exclamation and awoke, but the remembrance of my dream was vividly present; and as the rays of the morning sun beamed brightly in at our windows, I felt a pleasing confidence that the day would bring happiness to the poor as well as to the rich. All reflections upon the visions of the night were soon banished, however, by the shouts of “Merry

Christmas" from numerous happy little voices at our door, and we hastened to join in their pleasure.

A week passed by, and the little heroine of Christmas Eve again stood at our door. It was wonderful what a change a few happy days had wrought in her appearance ; and her whole face was radiant with joy, as she told me that they were all so happy now.

"Dear father had promised never to drink again, and he had good work, and they could all live comfortably." And again and again she assured me that their happiness was all owing, through the blessing of God, to the little book which she bought for father with a part of my Christmas gift.

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.

“FATHER! father! can I go a-nutting with Dick Rogers and Sam Roberts?” shouted Frank Wilbur, as he bounded into the room where his father was seated at a desk, busily engaged in sorting some papers.

“Softly, my son, softly!” replied Mr. Wilbur; “you will disturb your mother, who is not very well, you know. Where do you wish to go?”

“Out in the woods, father. The frost has cracked the chestnut-burs, and the nuts are rattling down so fast!”

“Have you heard them, Frank?” asked his father, smiling at his eagerness.

“No, father, I have not heard them, because I have been at school; but the boys say so, and I know they are. There was a real hard frost last night. May I go, father?”

Mr. Wilbur drew his watch from his pocket, and looked at it thoughtfully, as he replied,—

“You may go if you think it best, Frank ; but I rather advise you not to do so. There is but one hour of daylight left, and a large part of this would be spent in going to and from the woods. You have had a good play since you came from school ; and now is the time to look over your lessons for to-morrow.”

“Oh, no, father !” urged Frank. “This evening or to-morrow morning will do for the lessons.”

“There is no time like the present, Frank. Better learn your lessons now, and put off the nutting expedition until Saturday afternoon. That will soon be here,—only day after to-morrow.”

But Frank felt unwilling to follow this advice ; and, as his father gave him leave to do as he pleased, he hastened to get a basket and join his school-fellows.

“My father says there is no time like the present for learning my lessons, and I think there is no time like the present for gathering nuts,” he said to himself as he ran merrily along.

But Frank had forgotten another of his father’s mottoes, “Duty first, and pleasure afterwards.”

It must be confessed that he was rather in the habit of delaying the performance of duties until the last moment, although he had many times experienced the bad results of so doing.

It was indeed a long walk to the chestnut-trees ; and, after the boys had entered the wood, it seemed much darker than it did before, and the nuts were by

no means "*rattling down*" very fast. The frost had opened the burs a little, but the nuts were still safely enclosed in their prickly nests.

"It is too late to get nuts to-night," said Sam Roberts, the eldest of the three boys, looking somewhat fearfully around him; for Sam was not remarkable for his bravery.

"What are you afraid of?" asked Dick Rogers. "It will not be dark for a long time yet, only the trees keep out the light; besides, there is nothing to be afraid of in these woods,—neither lions, nor tigers, nor bears, nor wolves. So help me find some good clubs, Frank, and we will knock off some burs, at any rate."

"And, if it grows too dark, we can carry them home, and get the nuts out there," said Frank, as he eagerly looked around for a club.

Sam felt somewhat re-assured by the courage of his companions; and all three of the boys were soon busily employed in knocking the burs from the trees.

It was quite dusk when they reached home. Frank found his supper ready for him; and, after this was over, he spent an hour or two very pleasantly in getting the nuts from the burs, and roasting some of them in the kitchen fire. His sister Clara enjoyed this as much as he did; and they were quite surprised when their father came to tell them that it was half-past eight, and time for them to go to bed.

"Can we go into mother's room and say good night?" asked the children; for their mother had been ill for some weeks, and had not yet recovered sufficiently to leave her room.

"Yes, if you will move gently," replied Mr. Wilbur. "I think she is not asleep."

The children opened the door of their mother's room very softly, and peeped in. She was sitting in a large easy-chair, and smiled pleasantly upon them as they entered.

"You have been very quiet this evening, my children," she said. "How have you amused yourselves?"

"We have been cracking chestnut-burs, and roasting some of the nuts," answered Frank. "I went to the woods after school, and got a fine lot of burs; but the frost has not opened them very well yet."

"I am glad that you got so many," replied his mother. "And are your lessons all prepared for tomorrow?"

"O mother!" exclaimed Frank, "I have forgotten them entirely! I promised father to study them this evening. I am very sorry; but I will get up very early in the morning, and study them before breakfast. Will that do, mother?"

"It would do, Frank, if you could be sure that you would rise early, and that nothing would take your

attention from your lessons. But it is very dangerous to delay the performance of any duty until the last moment. Perhaps there is time to look over at least one lesson before you go to bed."

"I am pretty sleepy, mother," replied Frank, yawning. "I do not think I could understand the lessons. But I will be sure to get them in the morning."

"I hope nothing will prevent you, my son; and so now kiss me a good-night, and go to your own room."

"Will you come down stairs to-morrow, mother?" asked Clara, as she affectionately twined her arms around her mother's neck, and gave her a good-night kiss.

"Yes, dear, if I feel pretty well I think I shall come down to breakfast."

The children clapped their hands with delight, and joyfully went to their own rooms.

Frank's sleeping-room was on the west side of the house, and it was not very light there early in the morning. The clock was just striking when Frank awoke the next morning.

"That's right!" he exclaimed, "just six o'clock. I knew I should have time to learn my lessons before breakfast."

But, to Frank's great astonishment, the clock gave another stroke after he had counted six.

“It cannot be seven,” he said to himself. “It looks very early yet. Perhaps I counted too fast.”

Frank thought it better to hurry to dress himself, however, and was soon seated by the window, with his book in his hand.

But he had scarcely commenced studying when the breakfast-bell rung. Frank knew then that it must be half-past seven; and he ran down stairs, feeling a good deal mortified, and somewhat anxious as to how he should get through his lessons.

He found his father already seated, with the large Bible open before him; for morning worship always preceded breakfast. So Frank took his place at once, only waiting to give his mother a smile and a kiss; for he felt delighted to see her in her accustomed seat once more.

The family remained at the breakfast-table rather longer than usual, because it seemed so pleasant to be all together again; but at length Mr. Wilbur rose, and said he must go to his business.

“I am half an hour behind-hand this morning,” he added, smiling; “but, as it is mother’s first appearance since her illness, I did not like to be in haste.”

Frank cast his eyes toward the clock as his father spoke, and saw to his dismay that it was half-past eight.

“Are your lessons prepared, Frank?” asked his mother rather anxiously, as he sprang up in haste.

Frank felt ashamed to say that they were not, for he remembered how positive he had been the evening before that nothing could prevent him from learning them in the morning. But he was an honest boy, and told the whole truth at once.

There was no help for it now, for it was time for him to go to school; and so, with a heavy satchel of books upon his shoulder, and with a heart almost as heavy as the books, Frank bade his mother good-morning, and set off on his walk.

Mental arithmetic was the first lesson. It was always a difficult one for Frank; and, as might have been expected, he failed entirely in the recitation, and was obliged to leave the class and retire to his seat. This was but the beginning of troubles. The mortification of being sent from the class in arithmetic quite unfitted him for learning his other lessons well. His next recitation was very imperfect; his sums were all marked "*wrong*;" his writing was blotted, and looked very badly; in short, it was a day of misfortunes. He was not allowed to leave the room at recess, and was also detained nearly an hour after school to recite the lessons which he had failed to learn through the day.

It was with a sad countenance that he appeared in his mother's room on his return home.

"Where is Clara?" he asked, observing the absence of his sister.

"Gone to town with your father, my son," was the reply.

There was a large town near the village where Mr. Wilbur resided, and the children thought it a great privilege to be allowed to accompany their father when business obliged him to go there.

"Gone to town, mother!" echoed Frank. "Are they going to see the menagerie?"

"I believe they are, Frank."

"O mother! mother! why could not I have gone with them?" And, quite overcome by the disappointment and the previous disasters of the day, the poor boy burst into tears, and hid his face in his hands.

His mother pitied him very much; and, moving her chair nearer to him, placed her hand gently and soothingly upon his head.

Frank was comforted by this, and gradually ceased his sobs, and, seating himself at his mother's feet, laid his head in her lap.

"Your father waited more than half an hour after the usual time of your return from school, my son. He could not wait longer, as it would have made it too late for him to attend to his business. Why did you not come home sooner?"

"I could not, mother. I was kept after school because I did not know my lessons," answered Frank, sadly.

“And why did you not know them, Frank? Were you idle?”

“No, mother, I was not idle; I really tried to learn them, but somehow they would not stay in my mind. I think it was all because I did not know my first lesson this morning; and that made me feel so sorry and ashamed that I could not get the next one; and then I was sorry again, and could not get the third; and so on. One lesson knocked the other down,” continued Frank, smiling a little, “just as one card-house knocks the other, when I build the row of tents.”

His mother smiled also at this comparison, for she was glad to have Frank feel cheerful again.

“And why did you not know your first lesson?” she asked. “We must find out what gave the first blow to your tents; for, if we know the cause of the evil, we can perhaps find a remedy for the future.”

“The first lesson is in mental arithmetic, mother, and the boys are expected to learn it at home. I got up too late to study it this morning; and so, of course, I did not know it.”

“But yesterday afternoon was the time to study it, Frank. An hour before tea is the rule. Your school closes at three, and this leaves you time for a good play until half-past five; then you should study till half-past six.”

“But I went to the woods for nuts, mother. I wish father had not given me leave to go.”

“Your father likes to leave you in freedom sometimes,” replied his mother. “He wishes you to observe and feel the consequences of your own actions.”

“Well, I have felt the consequences this time, and they are bad enough,” said Frank, sighing. “You do not know how much I want to go to the menagerie, mother.”

“I know you want to go very much, and I feel much grieved at your disappointment, Frank; but the misfortunes of the day may be a useful lesson to you through your whole life, if you will try to profit by them.”

“I will, mother. I am resolved to act up to father’s motto in future,—‘There is no time like the present.’ You will see that all my duties will be done in proper time.”

“I hope so, my son. A habit of promptness, in the performance of even the most trifling duties, will be invaluable to you through life.”

“For a good beginning, mother,” continued Frank, “I will learn my lesson for the morning now, before Clara comes home, and then I shall be at leisure to talk to her.”

“I shall be glad to have you do so, Frank. And now I will tell you that your father intends going to town again on Saturday, and, if you are a good boy, will then take you to the menagerie.”

Frank’s face grew bright with pleasure.

“I am very glad!” he exclaimed. “But why did you not tell me before, mother?”

“I thought it better not to do so, my son. And now get your book, and I will explain the lesson to you.”

Frank obeyed; and the next half-hour was a pleasant one, although the dreaded arithmetic was in his hand.

Our young readers will wish to know whether Frank kept his resolution of never delaying the performance of duties; and if they will pass over with us the lapse of some six or seven years, and take another peep at him as a young man of seventeen, they will, we think, be able to answer the question to their own satisfaction.

Frank was now the only earthly protector of his mother and sister, for Mr. Wilbur had been removed to the spiritual world about two years before. He had left but little property; and Mrs. Wilbur found it better to leave her pleasant home in the village, and hire rooms in the town to which Frank and Clara used to love to go when they were children. Frank was very desirous to earn something to aid in their support; and his mother at length found a good situation for him in a large shipping-store. His salary was small, however; and Mrs. Wilbur and Clara were obliged to take fine sewing to do, and, even with this

assistance, found it difficult to maintain themselves comfortably.

“To-morrow I shall be seventeen, mother!” suddenly exclaimed Frank, as he sat thoughtfully gazing into the fire one evening after his return from the store.

“Yes, my son,” answered his mother. “You are almost a man.”

“And I ought to be able to take care of you and Clara, mother. My salary is too small. I know that my services are worth more than Mr. Lewiston pays me.”

“That may be, Frank; but he gives you as much as it is customary to allow boys of your age. I do not know that we ought to expect him to do more.”

“I cannot bear to have you and Clara work so constantly, mother. I am the one to work.”

His mother smiled affectionately upon him as she replied,—

“You do work for us all the time, Frank, and we love to look to you for help; but it cannot be supposed that, at your age, you can support us entirely.”

Just at this moment, Clara put the last stitches to the work upon which she was engaged; and, throwing it aside, she said joyfully,—

“Come, Frank, I have finished work for this evening. Bring your flute, and I will sing the new song that we like so much.”

Frank readily complied; and Mrs. Wilbur listened with delight as Clara's sweet voice mingled with the soft notes of her brother's flute.

But, at the end of the first song, Frank rose hurriedly, as if suddenly recollecting something, saying as he did so,—

“Mother, I must go back to the store for a little while.”

“Go back to the store, my son! For what purpose, at this hour?”

“A cask of gunpowder was brought there this afternoon, mother, and I fear that it was not put in a place of safety. We have a particular place for keeping it, in order to guard against accidents. It was given in charge to our head clerk; but he was unexpectedly called away this evening, and I do not feel sure that he attended to it.”

“But as you were not desired to take care of it, Frank, will it not answer to leave it where it is until morning?” asked Mrs. Wilbur, for the walk was a long one, and she felt sorry to have Frank go at so late an hour.

“You can move it to-morrow, when you open the store,” urged Clara. “You will need some one to help you, and there is no one there to-night.”

“There are men enough near by,” replied Frank, smiling. “I think I will go, mother. I do not love

to leave this pleasant room, especially as Clara is ready to sing with me; but I believe it is my duty to attend to that powder immediately. *There is no time like the present*, you know, mother. I do not forget father's motto."

"You have always remembered it well since the day of misfortunes at school," answered his mother, "and I will not urge you to act contrary to it now. Go, if you think it your duty."

And Frank went. As he expected, the gunpowder had not been put in a place of security. He attended to its removal, and then, with a quick step and a light heart, returned home. Clara had already retired to rest, and his mother was only awaiting his return to follow her example. Soon all were sleeping quietly.

An alarm of fire in the middle of the night, and the noise of the engines as they passed, aroused Frank; and, on looking from his window, he felt convinced that the light was in the direction of the store in which he was employed.

Hastily dressing himself, and pausing at his mother's door to tell her where he was going, he was soon walking rapidly to the spot.

As he approached, he felt relieved at finding that the fire had not originated in the store, as he had at first feared. It was, however, fearfully near; and, in spite of the efforts of the firemen, one part of it was soon in flames.

It was at this moment that Frank arrived at the scene of action ; and, at the same instant, Mr. Lewiston and the head clerk came running from opposite directions.

Frank followed his employer as he was hastily passing into the store, hoping that the most valuable goods might be removed ; but they were both forcibly pulled back by the clerk, who, with a countenance full of horror, exclaimed,—

“ The powder ! O, Mr. Lewiston, I did not remove it ; and the fire is in that part of the building ! ”

Mr. Lewiston uttered an exclamation of despair, and was springing from the door, when Frank laid his hand upon his arm.

“ All is right, Mr. Lewiston. I saw the powder properly stored.”

“ Bless you, my boy ! ” was the heartfelt reply ; and, relieved from this dreadful fear, all hands were soon at work to rescue the property from the devouring flames.

But the firemen had now gained the victory, and the fire was extinguished before it had reached the main part of the building. Only the left wing was burned ; but it was there that the powder had been placed, and from there Frank had removed it, in his late visit at the store the previous evening. He thanked the Lord that he had done this, as he thought of the

dreadful loss of life and property which might otherwise have taken place.

Again the little party had assembled around the table to enjoy their pleasant evening chat. It was on the day after the fire, Frank's seventeenth birthday.

"And now, mother, I have a piece of good news to tell you," he said, as he finished the recital of the adventures of the previous night; for, at Clara's request, he had told the story a second time.

"Mr. Lewiston has doubled my salary; and, moreover, he assures me that he will continue to advance me, and will at some future time endeavor to establish me in business for myself. And now, Miss Clara, you may put away your needle, and read and study a part of your time; and mother will no longer be so incessantly occupied with her work, but will have leisure to take some air and exercise, and she will look bright and happy again, as she used to when dear father lived with us."

"I ought to look happy when I have such kind children to take care of me," answered Mrs. Wilbur, smiling through her tears.

"I am *so glad* you went back to the store last evening, Frank!" exclaimed Clara. "I will never again try to persuade you to neglect the prompt performance of any duty."

“It will be a lesson to both of us,” replied Frank. “You do not know how happy I felt this morning when our head clerk offered me his hand, and told me that I had saved him from a life of misery; for, had there been an explosion, he should have considered himself as the cause of the disasters which must have followed.”

“It must make you very happy to think that you have been the means of preventing so frightful a calamity,” answered Mrs. Wilbur, “The lesson is indeed a useful one to us all; and in every duty, whether great or small, we will ever bear in mind your favorite motto, “‘There is no time like the present.’”

THE LITTLE MATCH BOY.

“DON’T cry, mother. I shall soon be older and stronger, and then I can do more for you and little sister. You shall never want for bread when I am a man. Don’t cry, mother, *please* don’t; it breaks my heart.”

The speaker was a manly little fellow of some seven years. His countenance would have been beautiful, but for an expression of premature and anxious care, and a look of patient suffering which it was painful to see on the face of happy childhood.

One arm was thrown around the neck of a pale, sad-looking woman, while the other clasped a chubby little girl, who, smiling through her tears, lisped, in her pretty childish accents,

“Don’t cry, mother. Rosy loves you.”

There was comfort in this. The last crust of bread had been eaten, and not a solitary sixpence remained to buy another loaf. The mother was too feeble and ill to ply her needle with that unremitting diligence

which was necessary for the support of her little ones. Her strength had already been too severely taxed; and now the time had come when Nature could no longer support the heavy burden. The future was very, very dark; and yet the mother's heart was comforted by the innocent love of her darlings. She wiped away those bitter tears, and tried to smile, as she clasped them to her bosom.

"My good Ernest," she exclaimed, "my sweet little Rosy, I will weep no more. Our Heavenly Father careth even for the sparrows. Surely He will not forsake us in our hour of need. You must go to Mr. Thayer's, my son, and see if he will give me some more work. Tell him that I have been very ill, but am better now, and should be glad of employment. Tell him, also, that it would be a great relief to me if he would pay me one dollar in advance. Perhaps he will do this for me."

"If he does not, he will be a cross man," said Ernest, "for he has a pocket-book full of dollars. I saw them the last time I was there."

"Yes, dear; but he employs a great many people, and has to pay out a great deal of money."

"You are not able to sew, mother," said Ernest, thoughtfully, as he took up his hat. "It will bring back the bad pain in your side."

"Perhaps not, Ernest. At any rate, I must try."

Go now, my son, for I have no bread to give little Rosy for her dinner ; and you, too, will soon be hungry."

The heart of the boy swelled almost to bursting, as he obeyed his mother's command. For many weeks she had been stretched on the bed of sickness ; and the kind physician, whom she was at length obliged to call in, had said, in Ernest's hearing, that she needed rest ; that such constant exertion would certainly cause her death.

"And now she has sent me for the sewing again," sobbed the poor child, "and I know it will kill her : and then, what will become of poor little Rosy and me. Oh ! how I wish I was older. If I could only earn a very little, it would be some help. Is there nothing in the world that little boys can do ?"

As Ernest said this, the shrill cry of a match boy attracted his attention ; and a bright thought entered his mind.

He could carry a basket, surely. It could not be so heavy as the baskets of wood and blocks which he often picked up around the new buildings for his mother. And he could call matches, and sell them, too, and take the money to his mother. And then, how comfortable she would be ; and she would not have to work so hard.

Pleasant visions of tea and bread, and even of a

pound of butter, passed before Ernest's eyes ; but then an unexpected difficulty arose. Where was the sum necessary for the outfit to come from ? It certainly did not need a very extensive capital ; but dollars, or even shillings, were hard to find. Ernest had not answered the question to his satisfaction, when he found himself at the door of the building, where he was to obtain the work for his mother. There was little trouble in making the desired arrangement. Mrs. Lawrence was well known at the establishment as an excellent workwoman ; and the work, and the dollar in advance, were readily furnished.

Encouraged by this success, Ernest involuntarily exclaimed,

“ Oh, how I wish that some one would lend *me* a dollar ! ”

“ And what would you do with a dollar, my little man ? ” inquired a gentleman standing by, attracted by the earnestness of the boy's manner.

Ernest blushed deeply, but answered, in a firm tone,

“ I would buy a basket and some matches, and other things, and sell them in the street ; and then my poor mother would not have to work so hard.”

“ You are a good son,” was the reply ; “ and I would willingly lend you the dollar, if I thought you were old enough to carry out the plan.”

“ Only try me, sir ! ” exclaimed the animated child.
“ Only try me ! You shall see that I can do it.”

At this moment, a hasty summons from a friend reminded the gentleman that he must not miss an approaching omnibus. He placed a dollar in Ernest's hand; and without waiting to hear his expressions of gratitude, sprung into the coach, and was soon out of sight.

With rapid steps, Ernest passed through the crowded streets, until he turned down the narrow alley which led to his own home.

His delight was almost too great for utterance; and he clasped his arms around his mother's neck, and fairly sobbed for joy.

"What is the matter, my dear son?" exclaimed Mrs. Lawrence, in alarm. "What new misfortune has befallen us! Would not Mr. Thayer give me employment?"

"Oh yes, mother; yes, indeed; and here is the dollar he sent you. I am not crying because I am sorry, mother. My heart is very glad. You will not have to work so hard any more, mother; and I shall help to support you and little Rosy. See what a kind friend has lent me." And as Ernest spoke, he held up the dollar which the gentleman had given him.

"And how will this enable you to support us, my child?" asked the widow, in astonishment, for she could not understand the meaning of Ernest's words.

"You shall see, mother. I will try my best, and

our Heavenly Father will help me. This dollar will buy me a basket, and a few things to put in it; and when I have sold those, I can buy some more. You do not know how well I can call matches, mother;" and he imitated the shrill cry so skilfully, that Rosy clapped her hands with admiration, and even his mother smiled at his enthusiasm.

But it was a sad smile; for it was a trial to her to have Ernest commence this new mode of life. He was a bright boy, and a good scholar for his age; and she had hoped that he would continue steadily at school, until he had acquired a good education.

But something must be done for their relief; and it was possible that the boy's small earnings might at least help to supply their scanty food.

So the basket was bought, and a moderate supply of matches and other trifling articles placed in it; and early on the following morning, Ernest commenced his new life.

His neat appearance, and bright, animated countenance, were so prepossessing, that many who observed him were disposed to buy; and one kind lady even bestowed an extra sixpence upon him, because he thanked her so gratefully for buying half-a-dozen boxes of his matches.

With a joyful heart, he placed his earnings in his mother's hands.

“Look, mother!” he exclaimed, “all this, besides what I need to buy more things with, and the sixpence which I have laid aside toward paying the dollar. You know I must lay by some every day to pay the gentleman. But how am I to find him, mother? I never thought to ask where he lived.”

“He probably meant to give you the money, Ernest, or he would have told you where to bring it.”

“Oh no, mother, he only lent it to me; I will pay it back, if I search the city to find him. How much I thank him for his kindness.”

“And I thank him too,” said little Rosy. “Now, we shall never be poor any more—shall we, Ernest?”

“I think not,” replied Ernest. “Mother shall have a cup of tea every evening; and after a little while, Rosy, we will have butter to eat on our bread, and I will buy you a pretty new frock.”

“Poor children!” thought the mother, as she gazed fondly upon them. “How little it takes to make them happy!”

It was really wonderful what success attended our little match boy. Not only were many daily comforts provided, but quite a sum was laid by for time of need. Ernest was almost too happy when he saw both his mother and Rosy dressed neatly in frocks which had been bought with his earnings; and his only trouble was, that he had not yet been able to discover the good gentleman who had lent him the first dollar.

“I should so love to thank him, and tell him how nicely we are getting along,” he would sometimes say. “Your cheeks are not quite so pale as they used to be when you sewed so many hours in the night, mother. I am very glad that I am old enough to help you.”

“You are a great help to me, indeed, my son,” replied Mrs. Lawrence; “but I feel anxious that you should have a little time to devote to your learning. We have some money laid by now, and I think you may let your basket rest for awhile, and attend school.”

Ernest loved his books, and his eyes brightened at the thought of school; but after a moment’s thought, he said,

“It would not do, mother, to give up my basket altogether, because there are a good many kind ladies who buy many things from me, and always wait for me to come; and besides, we should soon spend the little money that we have, and then you would have to work so hard again. But I will study, mother; you will help me, and I will try my best. I can spare two or three hours every day for my books.”

And from that time, with his mother’s help, and his own patient industry, Ernest made rapid progress; and even found leisure to instruct his little sister in several branches.

Rosy was an active little girl, and loved to make herself useful. It was her busy fingers that placed

everything in such neat and attractive order in her brother's basket; and it was she, also, who made the room look so very bright and cheerful, to welcome his return. While her mother was engaged with her sewing, she would sweep the floor, wipe every particle of dust from the scanty furniture, set the table, and do everything that one so young could do toward preparing their frugal meal.

"See, Ernest," she said, as her brother seated himself by her side one evening, after the tea table was cleared away, and Mrs. Lawrence had resumed her work. "See how nicely I have pasted this strip of sand paper over the mantel-piece, that you may have a place to light the match upon when you kindle the fire for mother in the morning."

"Yes, it looks very nicely," answered Ernest; "and I will try to remember never to draw the matches across the wall any more, since it leaves such ugly marks. But, Rosy, I see those same marks in very nice houses sometimes."

"Perhaps they did not think about pasting up sand paper," replied Rosy, thoughtfully; and then, after a moment's pause, she added, "You might cut some little strips, Ernest, and sell them with your matches."

"I might do something better than that," exclaimed her brother, as a sudden thought struck him. "If mother will give us some paste, and you will let me

use some of your pasteboard and bits of colored paper which the paper hanger, next door, gave you, I think I can make something very pretty to hold matches, and light them too."

The paste and paper were readily supplied, but Ernest soon found that it was quite beyond his skill to carry out the plan which he had formed; and he was delighted when his mother laid aside her work, and offered to assist him.

With her help, a stiff piece of pasteboard, seven or eight inches square, was partly covered with sand paper, and neatly bordered with colored paper. Two little round easels were then fastened upon the upper part of the card, to hold the matches; and a small hole was made in the middle, so that it could be hung upon a nail driven into the wall.

Ernest and Rosy fairly jumped for joy when the first one was completed and placed upon the mantel-piece to dry. The second one was made much quicker than the first; and Mrs. Lawrence soon became so expert, that she had finished half a dozen in a very short time. These were enough for an experiment. Ernest was sure they would sell for sixpence a-piece; and after he went to bed, he could hardly close his eyes, his mind was so busy thinking what a little fortune he should make with this pretty invention.

His expectations were not disappointed. At every

house where he called with his basket, the match cases were noticed and admired ; and before he had been an hour from home, he had sold the last one, and with a light heart returned to tell his success to his mother.

A fresh supply was soon obtained ; and for several days, he was equally successful in disposing of them.

At one house, where a little girl had purchased one of the first cases which had been made, he received an order for half-a-dozen, to be furnished as soon as possible.

“And be sure to make them very pretty, little boy,” said the young girl, as she stood at the door talking with Ernest ; “for my father will look at them himself, and he will want them very nice. He was quite pleased when I showed him the one which I bought the other day, and he said you were an ingenious boy.”

“My mother makes the greater part of them, Miss,” replied Ernest, blushing. “We will do our best to please you.”

Rosy had been uncommonly successful, that day, in collecting pretty pieces of colored paper ; and the six little cases, far prettier than any which had been made before, were soon completed and placed upon the mantel-piece to dry, that they might be in readiness for Ernest’s morning expedition.

Very happy he felt, as with his basket upon his

arm, he knocked at the basement door of the handsome house where he had often sold his little wares, and inquired of the girl who opened the door, if he could see the young lady.

"Oh, you are Miss Ellen's little match boy," was the reply. "Wait a moment, and I will call her."

Just then the door of the breakfast room opened, and Miss Ellen herself appeared.

"Have you brought them so soon?" she exclaimed, joyfully, as Ernest eagerly displayed his treasures. "Oh, they are very pretty! Come with me, and I will show them to papa. He has finished his breakfast, and is reading the morning paper. Come right along. Do not be afraid."

Ernest took off his hat, and followed his little conductress into the front basement. A pleasant-looking gentleman sat in an arm-chair, with a newspaper in his hand.

"Here is the little match boy, papa," said Ellen, as they entered. "He has brought the cases which you wished for. Look! are they not pretty?"

"Very pretty, my daughter, and very neatly made. What is your name, my little lad?"

But Ernest made no reply. He was looking intently and eagerly at the gentleman, and after a moment's pause, exclaimed,

"It must be the very one! I am so glad!"

"Glad of what, my little fellow?" asked the gentleman, smiling.

"Glad to find you, Sir. Do you not remember that you lent me a dollar? Oh, it has been of great use to me; and I have wanted so much to thank you, and pay it back to you. I have carried it in my pocket for a long time; but I did not know that you lived in this house."

As Ernest spoke, he drew a silver dollar from his pocket, carefully wrapped in a piece of paper, and offered it to the gentleman; but he drew back, saying, "This is some mistake, my lad. I never lent you a dollar."

"Oh yes, Sir, a long time ago; more than a year. It was in Mr. Thayer's shop, Sir. We were very poor then, and I was so anxious to do something to help my mother. You thought I was too small to carry a basket; but you lent me the dollar."

"I remember it now, my boy. You are an honest little fellow. And have you really succeeded well?"

"Very well, Sir. We are not so poor now. Mother does not have to work so hard, and we have good food and comfortable clothes. It is all owing to your kindness, Sir."

Once more Ernest offered the dollar; but the gentleman refused it, saying,

"I intended to give it to you, my child."

"But I should feel happier if you would take it, Sir; I have saved it for you so long."

"I will take the little match boxes instead, then," replied his friend. "Will that satisfy you?"

"They are not worth a dollar," replied Ernest; "but I can bring you more, if you like."

"We have enough, my good boy. A dollar is not too much for them. And now, give me your name, and tell me where you live, for I shall wish to see more of you."

"My name is Ernest Lawrence, Sir; and we live in one room of the large white house near the Baptist church."

"Ah, yes, I know the place. Well, Ernest, tell your mother that I will call to see her to-morrow morning, about ten o'clock."

"Thank you, Sir; I will not forget to tell her. She will be very much obliged to you for your kindness, and so will Rosy."

"Who is Rosy?" asked Ellen, who had been an attentive listener to the conversation between her father and the little match boy.

"My sister, Miss," replied Ernest, as he took up his basket, and made his best bow to the gentleman.

The next morning was a long one to the two children. Very early had Rosy assisted her mother in putting their little room in the neatest order; and two

hours before the time when they might expect the gentleman, she was gazing eagerly from the window, hoping that he would soon arrive.

The right time came at last; and Mr. Burnap—for this was the name of Ernest's benefactor—was seen ascending the steps. The children ran to the door to receive him, and show him the way to their room.

He spoke kindly to them both, and stroked Rosy's golden curls; but he had not long to stay, and seemed anxious to have some conversation with their mother. So the children employed themselves quietly in another part of the room, and were careful not to speak a loud word, for fear of disturbing their guest.

After a little while, they softly left the room, and seated themselves on the step of the outer door, where they could talk together in more freedom, and yet be very sure to see Mr. Burnap before he left the house.

In about half an hour, their mother called them.

"Come here, my boy," said Mr. Burnap, extending his hand to Ernest, as he advanced. "Your mother tells me that you are fond of your books. Would you like to give up going out with your basket, and attend a good school?"

Ernest hesitated.

"Speak out, my boy. Tell us what is in your mind."

"I should love to go to school very much, Sir, if I was sure that my mother would not have to work too

hard. My basket earns enough to buy us many comforts."

"I will see that your mother is provided for. Would you, then, like to attend school?"

"Oh, very much, Sir. I will study hard."

"That is right. You are a good son, and I think you will be a good man. As for my little Rosy, I am sure she is a good little girl, and does all she can to be useful."

"I can sweep the room, Sir," replied Rosy, smiling pleasantly, as the gentleman drew her to his side.

"I thought so, my child. It looks very nice. I must bring my little daughter to see you some time. And now, I must bid you all good morning. I will call again in one week, Mrs. Lawrence; please to have all in readiness."

Mrs. Lawrence bowed her head gratefully, but her heart was too full to speak; and she quite alarmed the children by weeping some time after Mr. Burnap left the room.

At length she grew calm, and was able to tell them all that had passed. Their kind friend had expressed his interest in Ernest's welfare, and had offered to give him a good education at his own expense. He had asked Mrs. Lawrence many questions concerning her present employment; and finding that constant confinement to her needle was injurious to her health, and

yielded them but a scanty support, he had proposed to her to remove to some comfortable rooms in a house of his own, part of which was at this time vacant. One of these rooms was fitted for a shop; and he offered to advance a sufficient sum to enable her to open a small thread and needle store, which would, he thought, be successful, and might be gradually increased.

Ernest and Rosy were almost wild with delight, when their mother told them of this plan. Rosy was sure she could soon learn to attend the shop as well as her mother; and Ernest thought he could help a great deal when he was not in school. Their hearts were filled with gratitude to their Heavenly Father, who had raised them up such a kind friend.

In about a week they were established in their new home, which seemed to them almost like a palace. Several articles of furniture were given them by Mr. Burnap; and the whole place presented a remarkably neat and attractive appearance.

The little shop was very successful; and before many months had passed away, Mrs. Lawrence was able, not only to repay the sum which their friend had advanced to them, but also to increase her stock of goods considerably.

Mr. Burnap would have objected to receiving the money, but Mrs. Lawrence begged that he would take

it, and if he pleased, use it to assist others who were poor and needy.

Ernest applied with great diligence to his studies, and made rapid progress. Little Rosy, also, was soon placed at school ; and was no less an industrious scholar than her brother. They delighted to do everything in their power to assist their mother, and often wished they could do more, to show their gratitude to the friends who had been so kind to them.

Mr. Burnap had no son, and Ernest became very dear to him. After several years, he took him into his own counting-room, and, as he grew older, made him a partner in his business.

Ernest, while still a young man, was a wealthy merchant. If you could have looked into his beautiful parlors, and have seen that handsomely-dressed, cheerful-looking old lady, seated in her rocking-chair, and that lovely young girl by her side, you would not have recognized poor Mrs. Lawrence and her little Rosy ; and in that gentlemanly-looking man who has just entered, you would have been still more unable to have recalled the little match boy, whose shrill cry had once been heard through those very streets, where he was now known and respected.

Ernest still loved to tell the story ; and when Rosy would sometimes say,

“That little thread and needle store seems like a

dream to me now," he would produce the very basket which he had formerly carried, and the silver dollar which he had so long reserved to repay his benefactor, and would smilingly reply,

"My match basket is still a reality to me, Rosy. We will not forget the days gone by."

I FORGOT.

"I ~~AM~~ glad you have come, Clara," said Mrs. Gray, as her little daughter entered the room, on her return from an errand to a neighboring shop; "I began to fear you would be too late. Where are the buttons?"

"The buttons!" exclaimed Clara. "Oh, mother, I forgot to buy them!"

"Forgot to buy them, Clara; how is that possible, when you went to the shop for the very purpose of getting them? I gave you no other errand."

"I know that, mother; but you gave me leave to buy the worsted to work the slippers for father, for which I have been saving my money so long. I met Anna Lee, and we were so busy talking together, and selecting the prettiest shades of worsted, that I quite forgot the buttons. I will go back again, mother."

"No, Clara, it will be too late; your father is now eating his dinner, and he expects the coach in a few minutes. I should have but just time to sew the but-

tons on his coat, if I had them now. If he had not been so suddenly called from home, his clothes would have been in readiness. I have exerted myself all the morning to put every thing in proper order for his journey, and all is now ready excepting his overcoat, which needs new buttons very much."

Clara looked sorry and ashamed, and just then her father entered the room, saying,—

"Is my coat nearly ready? I think the coach will be here in five minutes."

"I am sorry to say that Clara forgot the buttons," replied his wife, "and there is no time to send her again to the shop."

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Gray, "I must wear the coat as it is. I should be gone before she could reach the shop. It is not pleasant to think that my little daughter's forgetfulness obliges me to wear a shabby coat; but do not trouble yourself about it. I will get a tailor to repair it at the town where we stop for the night."

A few minutes passed, and the coach rattled to the door. Mr. Gray hastily bade his wife an affectionate farewell, and stooping to kiss Clara he said, "My daughter must remember that forgetfulness is, often, only another name for selfishness."

In another minute he had taken his place in the coach, the door was closed, the driver sprang to his

seat, and they whirled away as fast as the four stout horses could carry them.

Clara stood at the door until the coach was out of sight, and then slowly and sadly returned to the parlor, and seated herself by her mother.

"I am very sorry I forgot the buttons," she said; "but what did father mean by saying that forgetfulness is only another name for selfishness? I did not mean to forget, mother; I was willing to go for them. Selfish people are unwilling to do any thing to help others."

"There are many kinds of selfishness, Clara, and forgetfulness is certainly one kind. You have a bad habit of excusing many acts of thoughtlessness and carelessness by saying, 'I forgot.' Now can you tell me why you forgot to buy the buttons?"

"Because I was so engaged in selecting the worsteds and in admiring the pretty colors, mother."

"And was not that selfish, Clara? You did not forget your own errand, but you allowed it to engross your mind so entirely, that you forgot the real object for which you were sent to the shop. If you loved to be of use to me, as well as you love to please yourself, you would have remembered what I sent you for, and purchased that before you attended to your own wants."

"I will try to do better another time, mother," replied Clara, "and in this case I believe I was a little

selfish ; but I do not believe that forgetfulness is always selfishness."

"Not always, perhaps ; but very often," said Mrs. Gray. "If we love our neighbor as ourselves, we shall remember his desires as well as we do our own. It is a poor excuse for any fault to say, 'I forgot to do right.' Now, tie on your bonnet, Clara, and we will take a short walk this fine afternoon."

"Oh, thank you, mother ! I love to walk with you ; and will you tell me where father has gone, and all about it, as you said you would do when you were at leisure."

"I will," replied her mother. "We will take the pleasant retired path which leads through the woods, and when we reach our favorite seat we will rest ourselves, and talk about your father's journey."

Clara always found a walk with her mother instructive as well as delightful ; for Mrs. Gray allowed nothing to escape her observation, but made even the most trifling objects the means of conveying pleasant and useful information. A simple flower, or blade of grass, often served to impress upon Clara's mind the wisdom and beauty which is visible in all the works of the Lord ; and the music of the birds never fell unheeded upon her ear, but elevated her affections to her Heavenly Father, without whom not even a sparrow falleth to the ground. From her earliest child-

hood her mother had endeavored to give her habits of observation, and had taught her to regard nothing which the Lord has made as too trifling to be instructive and useful, if examined with proper attention.

“Anna Lee has collected specimens of a great many different kinds of leaves, mother,” said Clara, as she plucked a large oak leaf from a tree which they were passing, and admired its deep green and smooth glossy surface. “She has a very large book quite full, and yet she tells me that she has never been able to find two leaves exactly alike.”

“She will never find two leaves alike, Clara. There are no two things in creation that are exactly alike.”

“Why, mother, how can you know?” exclaimed Clara, in surprise. “There may be two things alike which you have never seen.”

“No, Clara, this cannot be. The Lord is infinite, and therefore there is an infinite variety in all things that He has made. There is not given any thing the same as another, and neither can be given to eternity.”

“Not even two blades of grass, mother?” asked Clara.

“No, Clara,” replied her mother, smiling. “When you are older you will understand this better, but it will always fill your mind with wonder and admiration. At present, it is sufficient for you to recollect what I have said,—that the Lord is infinite, and that,

therefore, there is an infinite variety in all things. To impress this upon your mind, you may compare as many things as you please, and you will soon find that although they will frequently look alike, yet by careful observation you will always find some slight shades of difference."

"Yes, mother, I will try," said Clara, "and I think I should like to collect a book of leaves like Anna's, if you are willing, mother."

"I have no objection, Clara; and, if you like, I will give you a short lesson to learn in a little book which I have on Botany, and then you will know the names of the different forms of leaves, and I will show you how to arrange them properly in your book."

"Oh, thank you, mother! I shall like that very much. And now here we are at our mossy seat, and I shall hear where father has gone, and why he looked so grave when he read that letter this morning."

"Yes, you shall now hear all about it," replied Mrs. Gray. "I was pleased to observe that you tried to suppress your curiosity this morning, and when your father requested you to leave the room, as he wished to talk with me alone, that you obeyed readily and without asking any questions. The letter was from your aunt Catharine. She tells us that her husband's health is evidently declining, and the physicians strongly recommend a milder climate. They also think that a

voyage at sea might be useful to him. He will leave home for Italy in a few days, and your aunt has decided to accompany him."

"And is little Ellen going with them, mother?" asked Clara, who was listening with eager attention.

"No, my dear," replied Mrs. Gray; "your aunt thinks that she could not devote herself so entirely to her husband if little Ellen was with her, and she has therefore decided to leave her behind, although it is a great trial to part with her. She would like to have Ellen remain with us during their absence, and this was the principal subject of the letter to your father."

"And shall you let her come, mother?" exclaimed Clara. "Oh, do say yes! I shall be so delighted to have a little sister like Ellen to play with. I will help you take care of her all the time."

"Her nurse will come with her," replied Mrs. Gray, smiling at Clara's eagerness. "Your father has now gone to visit your uncle and aunt, and it is quite probable that little Ellen and her nurse will return with him."

"How glad I am," said Clara; "I hope aunt will remain in Italy a long time. I do not mean that I hope uncle Henry's health will oblige them to stay, but I should love to have him get better, and conclude to travel for two or three years, and leave Ellen with us."

"There is no probability of their doing this, Clara. If your uncle should recover, they will return next summer; and though we may have become much attached to your little cousin, and grieve to part with her, I trust we shall not be so selfish as to wish to prolong her separation from her parents."

"I can teach her a great deal before they come home," said Clara. "She is nearly two years old now. I might teach her to read before she is three."

"We will first teach her to talk," replied her mother; "but we will not teach her to say, 'I forgot!'"

"No, mother, I will not teach her to say that. I will teach her all that I can that is good, but nothing that is evil."

"A very good resolution, Clara. And now we will return home, for the air is rather too cool."

Before I tell my young readers about Mr. Gray's return with little Ellen, I must introduce them more particularly to Clara; although, from what I have already said concerning her, they may have formed a good idea of her character, and have justly concluded that she is very much like themselves, sometimes trying to do what is right, and suffering herself to be led by the good spirits around her, and at other times somewhat selfish and thoughtless, allowing evil spirits to lead her in the wrong path.

Clara was nearly eleven years old. She was gener-

ally obedient to her parents and teachers, kind to her playmates, diligent in her studies, and orderly and industrious in her habits. Still she had some faults. Although obliging in her disposition, and desirous to be useful to those around her, she frequently entirely disregarded their wishes through mere thoughtlessness and inattention. Like most children, she was fond of play, and sometimes allowed her amusements to make her forget to perform her duties.

She was unwilling to believe that this forgetfulness was one form of selfishness; for Clara, like many other persons, believed herself free from this evil, because she was glad to share whatever she had with those who needed it, and was even willing to give up her own pleasure for the sake of being useful to others. I have known her to decline an invitation to a pleasant little party, because her mother was not quite well, and needed her attention; and yet, perhaps, in the course of that same afternoon, she would become so much interested in some book, or favorite amusement, that she would quite forget the object for which she remained at home, and entirely neglect to attend to her mother.

I will relate an instance of Clara's thoughtlessness, and you will then see that she sometimes gave great trouble to herself and to others, although she very seldom intended to do wrong; — she only *forgot to do right*.

Very near to Mr. Gray's there lived a good old woman, whom the children in the neighborhood called aunt Molly. She lived in a small cottage, with a neat little garden in front, containing a few flowers and vegetables, and one large apple-tree. Aunt Molly was quite lame, and always used a crutch in walking. She had one son, about eighteen years of age, who lived with her, and took care of her. During the day he was obliged to be from home to attend to his work, but he took good care to bring wood, and water, and every thing that he thought his mother could want, before he left her; and with the help of her crutch she was able to move about quite briskly, and her little cottage was always in the neatest order. Every child in the neighborhood loved to visit aunt Molly, for she had a kind word for each of them, and often a pleasant story to tell, or a gift of a rosy-cheeked apple or a pretty flower.

One bright afternoon in October, Clara asked her mother's leave to pass an hour or two at the cottage. Mrs. Gray readily consented, and requested her to take a glass of grape jelly, which she had just been making, to the old lady.

"I love to carry aunt Molly a little present, because she is always so much pleased," said Clara; and, tying on her bonnet, she bade her mother good afternoon, and taking the glass in her hand, soon reached

the cottage, where she found aunt Molly comfortably seated in her large arm-chair, with her knitting-work in her hands, and her crutch lying by her side. She was, as Clara expected, much pleased with the jelly, and said it was the best she had tasted for many years. Clara sat by her side for half an hour, chatting away very happily, and then aunt Molly requested her to read aloud to her for a little while, as her eyes were failing, and she often found it difficult to see to read herself. Clara readily complied, for she was glad to be of use, and another half hour passed away very pleasantly.

“Now,” said aunt Molly, “you must go to the garden, and find a nice apple for yourself. In a few days my son will gather them all, but I have none in the house to-day. You will probably find some good ones on the ground, or perhaps you can reach the lower branches of the tree.”

So Clara ran to the apple-tree, and looked around upon the grass beneath it for a nice apple. There were some pretty good ones, but they did not suit her exactly, for high up above her head she saw those that were much larger and fairer.

“There is a beauty!” she exclaimed; “I can almost reach it. I wish I had a stick. I will run and borrow aunt Molly’s crutch, and knock it down.”

Aunt Molly was quite willing to lend her crutch,

but she charged Clara to bring it back directly, as it was nearly time for her to put by her knitting and prepare tea.

“Oh, yes, I will come right back!” said Clara, “and I will set the table, and hang on the tea-kettle, and help you get tea.”

While Clara was endeavoring to knock the apple from the tree, she saw two of her schoolmates running along a lane not far from the cottage; they were talking very merrily, and seemed to be much pleased about something. Clara threw down the crutch and ran after them. They stopped when they heard her call to them, and told her that they were going to the grove to see a new swing which their brother had just put up.

“Can every one swing in it who wishes to?” asked Clara.

“Certainly,” replied Susan Allen, one of the little girls. “My brother said it was for the accommodation of all the children in the neighborhood. Come with us, and we will have a fine swing.”

In her eagerness to try the new swing, Clara quite forgot aunt Molly’s crutch, which she had left under the apple-tree, and ran hastily along with the other girls until they reached a small grove of willow-trees at the end of the lane. Here they found a fine large swing, and enjoyed their play so much that the time

passed very quickly. It was nearly an hour since Clara had left the apple-tree, when she suddenly sprung from the swing, exclaiming,—

“Oh, dear, I forgot aunt Molly’s crutch! I am so sorry,” and she run as fast as she could toward the cottage.

Poor aunt Molly, after waiting fifteen or twenty minutes for Clara to return with the crutch, began to fear that some accident had befallen her, and thought she would try to get to the door and look out into the garden. She succeeded in doing this, by taking hold of the chairs and other furniture. She saw her crutch lying under the tree, but nothing was to be seen of Clara. She called as loudly as she could, but no one answered. Becoming still more alarmed, aunt Molly endeavored to get down the steps which led into the garden, hoping to be able to reach her crutch.

“If I can only get my crutch,” she said to herself, “I will go to the next house, and ask them to look for the poor child, for I know not what has become of her.”

But, unfortunately, the old lady, naving nothing to take hold of, lost her balance and fell to the ground. The steps were high, and she was a good deal bruised by the fall, and her lameness entirely prevented her from rising, or helping herself in any way.

Providentially, however, her son returned at an

earlier hour than usual. He was much shocked at finding his mother in such a condition, and carefully raising her from the ground, he helped her into the cottage, and laid her upon the bed. He was then preparing to attend to the bruises upon her face and arm, which were beginning to look very badly, but his mother begged him to leave her and look for Clara, for she felt exceedingly anxious concerning her. Just at this moment Clara ran hastily into the room, with the crutch in her hand, which she had found under the tree where she left it. She felt very sad at finding aunt Molly so much injured through her forgetfulness and neglect. The kind old lady did not reproach her, but she begged her to try to grow more thoughtful and considerate.

Clara went immediately to her mother, and told her of what she had done, and Mrs. Gray hastened to the cottage with some liniment and other things which were useful for bruises and sprains.

It was several weeks before aunt Molly was able to sit in her chair and knit again, for her arm was so badly sprained by the fall that it was a long time before she could use it. Clara went every day to the cottage to assist her, and gladly gave up many of her hours for play that she might have leisure to attend to aunt Molly's wants, without neglecting her studies and other duties. This lesson appeared to make so deep

an impression upon her mind, that her mother hoped it would quite cure her fault ; but after a short time had passed away, Clara was nearly as heedless as she was before. When bad habits are once acquired it is difficult to overcome them, and many sad lessons are often necessary before we sincerely endeavor to remove the evil.

A few days after Mr. Gray had left home, his wife received a letter from him naming the day that he should probably return, and requesting to have a room prepared for Ellen and her nurse, as they would accompany him.

Clara was quite overjoyed, and begged her mother to allow her a holiday, that she might collect every thing that could please her little cousin from her old stores of playthings, some of which had long been laid aside. Mrs. Gray consented, and gave her leave to use the lower shelves of a closet in the room which Ellen was to occupy, for a baby-house. To this closet, therefore, Clara brought all her treasures, and spent several hours very happily in making new dresses for the dolls, and in arranging the different apartments of a house upon the shelves. At length the parlor, kitchen, and sleeping-rooms were all in proper order ; the dolls were suitably dressed, and placed in their respective places ; one or two were quietly seated in the parlor,

another was standing by a washtub in the kitchen, and another might be seen in the neatly made bed in the upper room. Mrs. Gray was then summoned to look at the baby-house. She admired the neatness with which every thing was arranged, but warned Clara not to be disappointed if she found Ellen too young to understand and appreciate it.

“Why, mother,” exclaimed Clara, “even very little babies like playthings.”

“Certainly,” replied her mother, “but they like to play with them in their own way. Ellen will, I doubt not, be much pleased with the baby-house, but she will not know how to arrange things in an orderly manner, as you do. For instance, you have placed the clothes for your dolls very neatly in the drawers of the little bureau. Now, it is quite probable that Ellen will be delighted with the bureau, but she will not be willing to allow the clothes to remain in the drawers. Every drawer will be taken out, and the clothes unfolded; the bureau will be turned upside down, and perhaps a block-house built with the drawers.”

“Oh, mother,” said Clara, “that will not do at all! I will show Ellen how to play properly.”

“You can let her see how you use the playthings, and she will soon begin to imitate you; but do not interfere with her plays too much. It is better to let little children play in their own way, as much as we

ean, without allowing them to injure themselves or others. The Lord keeps good spirits constantly near to them, and in every innocent amusement they are endeavoring to impart those remains of goodness and truth which will enable them to be useful and happy as they grow older."

"I will remember this, mother, and I will try to be patient, even if little Ellen pulls my pretty bed to pieces, and puts the ladies into the kitchen, and Susy, the girl who does my work, into the parlor."

"She will probably do these and many other strange things," replied Mrs. Gray; "but you must always try, when playing with little children, to play entirely for their amusement. Do not attempt to have things in your own way, but devote yourself to making them happy."

"And now all is ready," said Clara, "and how I wish to-morrow evening was here."

"Never wish away time, my dear Clara, but endeavor to improve every moment as it flies. When we are busily engaged in our duties and pleasures, time always passes quickly."

Clara followed her mother's advice, and attended diligently to her studies during the forenoon of the following day. The afternoon was devoted to reading, sewing, and walking. The hours soon passed away, and the coach containing the travellers drove to the

door before Clara had begun to watch for its appearance.

For two or three days little Ellen was too much grieved, by the separation from her father and mother, to show much affection for the new friends around her; but she soon forgot her troubles, and appeared perfectly contented and happy. She was a sweet-looking, happy child, and no one could look in her innocent face without loving her dearly.

Clara devoted every leisure moment to her. The baby-house was at first in constant disorder, but very soon Ellen would try to arrange the playthings as she saw Clara do, and if she did not succeed in putting them in their proper places, she would run to her cousin, and pull her by the frock, saying, "Come, Tara, come." When all the things were in order, she would clap her little hands, and say, "Pretty, pretty! Ellen happy now." This pleased Clara very much, and she sometimes told her mother that she loved Ellen more and more every day.

"I can teach her many things," she said, "but there are some things which she teaches me. I never thought so much about the Lord, and heaven, and the angels, as I have done since Ellen has lived with us. I love to think how the angels watch over her, and try to teach her what is good and true. Sometimes when my lessons trouble me, and I feel idle and cross, if

little Ellen comes into the room all these evil feelings go away, and I resolve to be good and happy. I think she brings the angels with her, and this makes me feel better."

"You must remember that the Lord keeps angels near to you as well as to Ellen, Clara," replied Mrs. Gray. "The evil spirits are suffered to have more power over you than over her, because you are older, and have learned to distinguish between good and evil. You can easily tell whether the thoughts which come into your mind are right or wrong, and you know that the Lord will always enable you to remove the evil spirits, and suffer the angels to draw near to you, if you sincerely desire it."

"Yes, mother, I know this; but sometimes I think I should love to be a little child like Ellen, and then I should not so often feel tempted to do wrong. How sweet she looks when she is asleep. When I look at her then, mother, I always feel like praying to the Lord. My heart seems to be raised to Him."

"It is a good feeling, my dear child," said Mrs. Gray, kissing Clara affectionately. "The angels are indeed near to you when your heart is thus raised to your Heavenly Father, and He will always hear your prayer, and strengthen you to walk in the path of goodness and truth."

Several months had passed since the commencement

of our story, and in many respects Clara had considerably improved. "I forgot" was an expression less frequently used than formerly; but still her old habits of heedless forgetfulness were often troublesome, and she was frequently mortified to find that her friends feared to trust her in any important matter, lest she should neglect to perform her duty.

"Why will you never allow Ellen to walk alone with me, Margaret?" inquired Clara of the faithful woman who had charge of her little cousin; "I am sure I am old enough to take good care of her, and she loves me almost as well as she does you."

"You are very kind to her, and she loves you very much, Miss Clara," replied Margaret; "but I should fear to trust her in the street with you, because you are sometimes a little thoughtless, and some accident might happen to her. When your aunt parted from the dear child, she begged me, with tears in her eyes, to watch over her night and day, and I shall faithfully try to keep the promise I then made."

"But, Margaret," urged Clara, "what accident could happen to Ellen if I took her to walk up and down the street, and kept hold of her hand all the way. I would not leave her an instant."

"You might forget her," said Margaret, hesitatingly, for she did not wish to grieve Clara. "Some of your schoolmates might call to you, or something else might take your attention."

“You ought not to say so,” replied Clara, looking a little offended. “I know I forget things sometimes, but they are almost always trifling matters, such as errands, or some other little thing. I could not forget Ellen. Could I, mother?” she continued, appealing to her mother, who was sitting in the next room, and had heard the conversation. .

“I think Margaret is right, Clara,” replied Mrs. Gray. “While we see you so forgetful of little duties, it would not be proper to intrust you with any thing important. I think you have improved in this respect lately, but you are still very thoughtless, and do not make so much effort to correct the fault as I could wish.”

Clara did not look very pleasant while her mother was speaking.

“I do not think I am any more forgetful than other people,” she said. “Every one forgets sometimes.”

“You speak improperly, Clara,” said her mother. “You are not in a good, humble state,—willing to acknowledge your faults and try to remove them.”

Clara made no reply, and soon left the room. She felt grieved and displeased that her little cousin could not be intrusted to her care, and she felt disposed to charge her mother and Margaret with unkindness, rather than to blame herself for deserving the mortification.

Not many days after the above conversation, Clara and Ellen were playing in the sitting-room, while Mrs. Gray and Margaret were busily engaged in one of the upper rooms, quilting a bed-spread. There was no fire in the room where the children were, and it appeared perfectly safe to leave them together for an hour or two.

Clara was keeping house, and she frequently sent Ellen to different parts of the room to purchase such articles as she supposed herself to need. Sometimes she was ordered to go to the grocer's for tea and sugar, sometimes to the market for meat and vegetables. Ellen would run cheerfully to the place pointed out, pick up a bit of paper or any thing else that she could find, and return with it to Clara. I suppose you have all seen children playing in this manner.

"You must have a market-basket, Ellen," said Clara. "I know where there is one that will do nicely. It belongs to me, but I never used it, so mother put it up on the upper shelf in this closet. I will take it down."

Thus saying, Clara opened the door of the closet, and stepped upon a chair that she might reach the basket. There were several other things upon the shelf, and amongst others a box of small papers, neatly folded up and carefully labelled. When Clara took her basket down she upset this box, and some of the

papers fell to the floor. She picked them up and put them in their place ; but after she had shut the door, she saw that one little parcel had fallen upon the table near to the closet. "Never mind," thought Clara, "I will put it back directly, as soon as I have fixed the basket for Ellen."

They continued their play, and an hour passed very happily. Clara had forgotten all about the paper, which still lay upon the table. She was showing Ellen the pictures in a large and valuable book of her father's, when Margaret looked in at the door, and inquired if they wanted any thing.

"Nothing at all, I thank you, Margaret," replied Clara ; "you may quilt another hour, if you like. We are having a fine time."

Margaret gave them each a cake, and returned to her work.

While they were eating their cake, Clara saw a little girl, of whom Ellen was very fond, driving her hoop back and forth in front of the house.

"Oh, there is Mary!" she exclaimed ; "look, Ellen, how fast she drives her hoop! I wish I could take you out there."

Ellen knocked upon the window, and called "Mamy, Mamy!" but Mary did not hear.

"I will run to the door and call her," said Clara,

“and then she will come and see Ellen. Will you sit still while I am gone?”

Ellen sat down very quietly, and folded her hands, as she always did when asked to wait for any one, and Clara ran to the door to call Mary.

Mary was an obedient, thoughtful child, and she told Clara that she could not come without her mother's leave, but if she would wait a moment, she would ask her.

The house where Mary lived was next door to Mr. Gray's, so Clara promised to wait while she asked her mother.

“Be as quick as you can, Mary,” she said, “for I left Ellen alone.”

Mary ran into the house, but returned directly, saying, “I cannot come now, Clara, because mother wants me to take care of the baby. But just look at this beautiful present that my aunt sent me last evening,” and she showed Clara a pretty little work-box, and, touching a spring, it commenced playing a lively tune. “How pretty!” exclaimed Clara, “I never saw a musical work-box before;” and she stood still listening to the music until the sounds died away, and the box was as silent as any other work-box.

“Oh, make it play once more, Mary!” said Clara; and Mary again touched the spring, and it played another tune even prettier than the first.

Clara would still have begged for another, for the music and the pretty box had banished every thing else from her mind; but her more thoughtful companion reminded her that Ellen was alone, and that she must go to her mother.

“Oh, dear!” exclaimed Clara, “I forgot all about Ellen; I hope she has not cried for me. Perhaps she opened the door and went up stairs. She goes up alone sometimes. Good-bye, Mary,” and she ran back to the sitting-room.

Ellen had left the seat where Clara had placed her, and was standing by the table, with the little parcel which had been left there in her hand.

As her cousin entered the room, she looked up and said,—

“Ellen cry when Tara gone,—then Ellen find sugar.”

“Sugar,” said Clara, snatching the paper from her hand. “Have you been eating it, Ellen? I wonder what it is.”

As she spoke she looked at the writing upon the back of the paper, and saw “Sugar of Lead” written upon it in large letters, and the word “poison” beneath.

Clara saw that the paper was now empty, and she knew that Ellen must have eaten its contents. She turned deadly pale, and for a few moments stood motionless, as if at a loss what to do. Then rushing to the staircase, she screamed to her mother and Mar-

garet in such a frantic manner that they both ran to her in great alarm.

“Oh, mother, mother!” she sobbed, “I have killed Ellen. I left her alone for a few minutes, while I listened to Mary’s music-box, and she has eaten some sugar of lead.”

“Eaten sugar of lead!” exclaimed Mrs. Gray. “It is impossible, for it was upon the upper shelf in the closet; she could not have reached it.”

“No, no, mother, she did not reach it; but I left it on the table, and forgot to put it back, and then I forgot to return to Ellen, and stood listening to the music a long time. She has eaten it all, and she will die, mother. Oh, what shall I do?”

Poor Margaret had caught Ellen in her arms, and was now sobbing as if her heart would break; but Mrs. Gray, with more presence of mind, begged her to be calm, and not alarm the child, as any agitation might hasten the effect of the poison.

“Do you, Margaret, go immediately for Dr. Gregory,” she said, “and Clara must go to her father’s office and ask him to come directly home. There was but a small quantity in the paper. We may do much for her if we are calm.”

Then, taking the child in her own arms, she spoke to her in a quiet and soothing manner, and taking her up stairs, gave her an antidote for poison, and

then amused her until the physician and Mr. Gray arrived.

Prompt and judicious remedies in a measure counteracted the fatal effects of the poison, but a serious illness could not be avoided. For many days little Ellen seemed to hover between life and death, and even after the physician had pronounced her out of danger, she was for a long time so feeble that no one would have supposed her to be the same child who had seemed so full of life and health but a few weeks before.

I shall not attempt to describe the agony which poor Clara suffered during the sickness of her little cousin. Her parents treated her with great kindness, for they thought the lesson she had received was sufficiently severe, without adding to it by their reproaches.

For a long time she could not bear to say a word upon the subject, but it was evident that a great change was taking place in her character. She was now not only industrious and obliging, but so thoughtful and considerate that her friends soon felt willing to trust her, even where the greatest care was necessary.

The cold winter months had passed away, and spring had again returned to gladden the earth. Favorable accounts had been received from Ellen's parents. Her father's health had improved rapidly, and they were now about to return home.

“Do you think they will be here in another month, mother?” asked Clara, as her mother finished reading a letter which she had just received from their distant friends.

“I think they will, Clara,” replied Mrs. Gray. “Are you prepared to part with our dear Ellen?”

Clara’s eyes filled with tears as she replied, “I shall try to be prepared, mother, but it will be a great trial. I always loved Ellen dearly, and since I came so near being the cause of her death, I have loved her more than ever. Every day I thank the Lord for His mercy in restoring her to health. It was a sad lesson, mother, but it helped me to see how really selfish I was. I could never quite understand why you and father should call forgetfulness a kind of selfishness; but when I sincerely endeavored to become more thoughtful, I found that the true reason why I used to forget so often was because I thought so much more of myself than I did of others. I now try to be very watchful of this fault, and I pray to the Lord to help me put it away.”

“And you will never look to Him in vain, my dear Clara,” said Mrs. Gray. “You have already improved very much. Persevere steadily in the endeavor to remove selfishness in all its forms. It is the fountain from which many evils flow.”

THE SILVER MORNING

AND

THE GOLDEN DAY.

“O FATHER! please to come to the door, and see how pretty everything looks,” exclaimed William Mason, running eagerly into the room where his father was sitting.

Mr. Mason was always glad to give his son pleasure, and he laid aside the newspaper which he was reading, and followed him to the door.

There had been quite a heavy snow-storm a few days before, which was succeeded by rain, and then by severe cold. Everything was now entirely cased in ice.

“Is it not beautiful, father?” said William. “I have been all around the yard and garden, and everything has put on its winter coat. Every little branch and twig, every blade of grass, and even the little stones are covered with ice.”

"This is what we used to call a silver morning, when I was a boy," said Mr. Mason.

"That is a good name for it, father," replied William; "for everything shines like silver. Look at the road; it is almost as smooth as the pond. I think I can skate to school this morning."

"You would probably find some rough places, which would injure your skates," replied Mr. Mason; "but look towards the east, my son, and you will see something more beautiful than anything you have yet observed."

There was a thick wood of pines toward the east, and, as William looked, he saw that the trees glittered like diamonds, and he could see colors like those of a rainbow in every direction.

He clapped his hands with delight.

"O father," he exclaimed, "this is the most beautiful sight of all. The sun is rising, and soon it will shine on all the trees and plants, and then everything will look as beautiful as the pine trees do now. It was a silver morning, father, but it will be a golden day."

"It will, indeed," replied Mr. Mason. "Everything looked cold and dead before the rays of the sun shone upon them, but now all are sparkling with beauty. The trees will soon lose their icy casing, but the water will sink into the ground, and perform many important uses. The frosts and snows of winter prepare the way

for the warmth and beauty of spring and summer. The earth rests from its labors, and is in various ways enriched and strengthened."

"I like all the seasons, father," said William. "In winter, I am so happy when skating and sliding in the fine cool air, that I wish the weather might always be cold; but when spring and summer and autumn come, with their long sunny days, and their beautiful birds and flowers and delicious fruits, I quite forget winter and its pleasures."

"Yes, every season has its delights," replied his father; "but look, William, there is one of your school-fellows. Is he already on his way to school?"

"Oh, that is only Louis Cunningham," returned William, glancing rather contemptuously at a plainly dressed, but intelligent and manly looking boy, who was passing by.

"*Only Louis Cunningham,*" repeated Mr. Mason! "Well, is he not one of your school-fellows?"

"Why, yes, father, he goes to the same school. The master gives him his schooling for making the fire and keeping the room in good order. We call him the charity scholar."

"I am grieved to hear you speak in this manner," said Mr. Mason, gravely. "Mr. Cunningham died when Louis was very young, and his mother has been obliged to deny him many advantages of education,

which she would gladly have given him if it had been in her power. Your teacher heard of their situation, and finding, from conversation with Louis, that he was an intelligent boy, and very desirous to learn, he kindly offered to take him into his school. But Louis and his mother, although they were very grateful for the offer, felt unwilling to accept it, unless they could make some return for the kindness; and it was finally arranged, that Louis should take care of the school-room and make the fire, and I have been told that he performs these duties very faithfully."

"He does, indeed," replied William. "The room is always warm and comfortable, and so nicely swept and dusted, that we never have any cause of complaint."

"One would suppose, then, my son, that you would feel grateful to the person who performs these kind offices, instead of regarding him with contempt and dislike."

"Oh, we do not dislike Louis, Father. He is always kind and obliging; but we do not like to see him placed on an equality with the rest of the boys, and often pronounced the best scholar in his class."

"These are evil feelings, William, and I hope to have the pleasure of helping you put them away. Sit down by me in the parlor for a few minutes, and we will talk about Louis. Can you tell me why the boys

think he should not be placed upon an equality with them? Is he inferior to the others as a scholar, or is he a wicked, profane boy?"

"Oh no, father. Louis is a very good boy, and a better scholar than many who have had greater advantages; but, as he does not pay for his schooling, we do not think that he is entitled to the same privileges that we are."

"Even if this were the case, he would be entitled to every privilege, William, if Mr. Grant chose to instruct him without remuneration; but Louis does pay for his schooling; not indeed with his father's money,—because the Lord has seen fit to remove his father to the spiritual world,—but with his own labor. Mr. Grant considers his services as an equivalent to his instruction, and, according to your own account, the duties are well performed. Louis, then, pays for his schooling as much, or more, than any boy in school; for the others depend upon their father's labor, while he depends upon his own. Your school bills, as well as other expenses, are paid from the proceeds of my daily labor in my profession, and the case is the same with the other boys who attend your school."

"This is very true, father," replied William, "and I know it is wrong to despise those who are poorer than ourselves. We often laugh at Louis, when he comes to school with coarse, patched clothes; but

I suppose his mother cannot afford to buy him any better."

"She cannot, indeed, William; and of how little consequence is external clothing, compared to many other things in which Louis probably surpasses your other school-mates. It is right to be neat and clean, and as well dressed as our circumstances will admit; but the clothing of our soul is of more importance than the clothing of our bodies. If Louis is industrious, obedient, faithful in the performance of his duties, and in the endeavor to shun evil words and deeds, he appears to the Lord and the angels as if clothed in the most beautiful raiment."

William made no reply, but appeared much interested in what his father was saying, and Mr. Mason continued,—

"You must ever remember the Golden Rule, my son. Think how you would wish to be treated, if you were situated like Louis; and then you will be more careful not to wound his feelings, by contempt or idle jests."

"I will try to remember, father. I know I have done wrong, and I will begin to-day, and treat Louis just the same as I do the other scholars. Perhaps I may be able to help in some way."

"These are good resolutions, my son; and, if they are carried into practice, they will do you and others

much good. The light has dawned in your mind. It is a *silver morning*, and the rays of the spiritual sun will render it a *golden day*."

Within an hour after this conversation, William was on his way to school, with his satchel of books and his skates slung over his shoulder, and his dinner pail in his hand. He was soon joined by several companions, and each boy tried to display his skill in keeping his balance on the glare ice, which to many would have rendered the road almost impassable. But boys have little fear of ice and snow, and, half running and half sliding, they soon reached the school-house, where they found, as usual, a comfortable and neatly arranged room.

Louis Cunningham was busily engaged at his desk, and, being little accustomed to any morning salutations from his school-fellows, he did not look up when they entered. He was somewhat surprised to hear William exclaim: "Good morning, Louis. What a grand fire you have got for us. I am sure we are much obliged to you, this cold morning."

"You are very welcome," he replied with a pleasant smile. "I came earlier than usual, on account of the severe cold. I am glad you find the room comfortable."

"I should not have liked to have been the one to make the fire this morning," remarked one of the boys.

“In many schools the scholars take turns in cleaning the room and making the fire.”

“It is not fair that they should do so,” observed another. “Their parents pay for their schooling, and it is not right that they should be obliged to spend their time and injure their clothes in sweeping rooms and making fires. It does well enough for those who cannot pay.”

“For shame! John Gray,” exclaimed William. “You should not speak so thoughtlessly. You trouble Louis,” he added in a whisper.

John was a kind-hearted boy, but rude and thoughtless in his manners.

“I do not wish to trouble Louis,” he said aloud. “I only spoke the truth.”

The color, which had deepened on Louis’s check, faded away, and he said, kindly,—

“You do not trouble me, John. I agree with you in thinking that those whose parents can pay for their schooling should not be expected to take care of the room. But as I am situated, I regard it as a very great favor that I am in this way enabled to earn my own schooling.”

“It is a great favor to us,” exclaimed several boys. “We never before had so neat and comfortable a room.”

The entrance of Mr. Grant, the teacher, prevented

any farther conversation, and each boy quietly took his seat, and performed his accustomed duties.

At noon, there was fine sport with coasting and skating, but, in the midst of his play, William remembered his promise to his father; and, finding that Louis was not among his companions, he sought him in the school-house. He found him seated at his desk, busily engaged with a pencil and piece of paper.

"Come, Louis," he exclaimed, "Come and play with us. There is fine skating on the pond."

"Thank you," replied Louis, "but I have no skates this winter. I had a pair once, but they are worn out."

"Then I will lend you mine, and I will slide for a little while. I shall like that quite as well. Do come," urged William; and, as he spoke, he approached the desk, and looked at the picture which Louis was drawing.

"Why, Louis!" he said, with an expression of surprise, "I had no idea that you could draw so beautifully. You almost equal our drawing-master. Who taught you?"

"No one," replied Louis. "I love to draw. If it were not wrong to neglect other duties, I would spend every day in doing nothing else."

"Why do you not take lessons with the rest of us, Louis? I am sure our drawing-master would be proud

of such a pupil. How you would laugh at our strange-looking pictures ! ”

“ Mr. Grant is very kind, to give me so many other advantages,” answered Louis ; “ I should not like to ask the privilege of a seat at the drawing-tables, and then the pencils and paper are quite an expense. And if I learned to paint, it would be still more expensive ; but, oh ! I should love to learn so much,” and his face grew bright with pleasure at the very thought.

“ You must learn, Louis ; I am resolved that you shall,” said William ; “ but come now, and have one good play before school.”

Thus urged, Louis joined his companions, and, encouraged by William’s example, all received him kindly, and were careful to allow him equal rights with themselves, and not to wound his feelings by foolish jokes and sarcastic observations.

About fifteen minutes before the hour for school to commence, William saw Mr. Grant enter the school-house, and, quietly leaving his play-fellows, he hastened to follow him.

Taking from Louis’s desk the picture upon which he had been so busily engaged at noon, he presented it to the teacher, saying,—

“ Is not this pretty well done, sir ? ”

“ Remarkably well,” replied Mr. Grant. “ You have improved wonderfully, William.”

“It is not mine, sir. Louis did it. He has never had any instruction in drawing, but I am sure if you will allow him a seat at the drawing-tables, he will soon equal our drawing-master himself.”

“He shall have every advantage, certainly,” replied Mr. Grant. “I am pleased with your request, William; for I have observed with pain that some of the scholars regard Louis with feelings of contempt and dislike, which are certainly quite undeserved.”

“I have been in fault in this respect,” replied William, blushing deeply, “but my father has convinced me that such feelings are very wrong, and I am resolved to do better.”

“I am glad that you have made so good a resolution, William. Your example will help the other scholars to do right also. You may have the pleasure of telling Louis that he can receive regular instruction in drawing, on the afternoons when the drawing-master attends the school.”

“Thank you, sir,” replied William, and he joyfully returned to his play-fellows.

A few whispered words told Louis of what had passed, and the glow of pleasure which suffused his countenance, and the warm pressure of the hand, amply rewarded William for his kindness.

“I have pencils and paper enough for both, Louis,”

he continued, "and I know my father will be glad to have me share them with you."

The sound of the bell now summoned the whole party to the school-room, and as this was the afternoon for the drawing-master, William had the pleasure of seeing his new friend seated by his side, and of hearing the warm commendations which were bestowed upon the contents of his little portfolio, which, at the request of the teacher, Louis modestly exhibited.

Much of the ice in the streets had melted away, but the trees were still glittering in the bright sunlight, when William left the school-house and took the road toward home. To him everything seemed even more beautiful than it had done in the morning, for his heart was filled with that happiness which always results from doing good. His father met him at the door.

"Well, my son," he said, "has it been a golden day with you?"

"It has, indeed, father," replied William. "I have remembered what you told me, and I have already found an opportunity to do Louis some good."

Mr. Mason listened with much interest to William's little story, and gladly gave him leave to assist Louis, by lending him his own drawing implements.

It was pleasing to observe the effect which William's example of friendliness to Louis had upon the rest of the scholars. He was no longer regarded with con-

tempt or indifference, but became as great a favorite with the boys as a play-fellow, as he was with the master as a scholar. The younger boys looked to him for assistance in all their pleasures and troubles, for they found that he was always willing to give up his own pleasure for the sake of making them happy; and the older ones frequently assisted him in his duties in the school-room, in order to gain so valuable a companion in their plays.

His improvement in drawing and painting was so rapid, that, before many months had elapsed, the drawing-master declared he could teach him nothing more, and advised him to procure a situation in some of the large schools in the neighborhood, as teacher of these branches. But about this time circumstances occurred, which induced Mrs. Cunningham to remove to a distant part of the country, and Louis was obliged to bid farewell to his teachers and companions.

All parted from him with regret, but none felt the loss so keenly as William Mason. He had been the first among the boys to love Louis and endeavor to assist him; and, although the latter was some years older, a warm attachment had sprung up between them.

Many years passed before they again met. Both had grown to manhood, but the remembrance of their early days was still fresh in their minds. William

was travelling through the principal States of the Union, and stopped for the night in one of our most flourishing cities. In the course of the evening he visited, with some of his friends, a gallery of paintings which had been particularly recommended to his notice. The collection was a fine one, and an hour soon passed pleasantly away. At length William suddenly stopped before a small picture, and uttered an exclamation of surprise, which brought his friends to his side. The scene represented was not a remarkable one,—a bright winter's morning, and a lad with a satchel of books and a pair of skates slung upon his shoulder, and a dinner-pail in his hand, quietly pursuing his way to school.

“What do you find surprising in this?” asked one of William's companions. “It is a spirited little sketch, to be sure. That lad bears a strong resemblance to you, William.”

“It is myself,” exclaimed William; “and there is the old school-house in the distance, and the pond where we used to skate. Every object in the picture is familiar to me, even that old tree which seems so completely cased in ice. I must find the name of the artist.”

“That is easily ascertained,” replied his companion, turning to the catalogue which he held in his hand; “Cunningham, Louis Cunningham. There are seve-

ral other fine pictures in the gallery by the same person. Do you know him, William?"

"He is an old school-mate and particular friend," replied William; "I must inquire if he resides in this city."

Louis Cunningham's address was easily obtained, and William had the pleasure of hearing him spoken of as a young artist of uncommon talents. At an early hour the following morning he sought his early friend, and received a warm welcome. Louis's story was soon told. His mother's situation in life had been improved, by a legacy left by a distant relative, and she was thus enabled to give her son many advantages. He had travelled in Europe, and received the best instruction in his favorite pursuit, and his name was now becoming widely known as one of our best American artists.

"But I have not forgotten the old school-house, and our boyish days, dear William," he continued; "and I do not forget that my first instructions in drawing were received through your kindness. It was a bright day to me when I was first seated at the drawing-table, and allowed free access to your pencils and paper."

"I remember it, as if it were but yesterday," replied William. "We had indulged a strange prejudice against you up to that day, Louis. My father had labored hard that bright and beautiful morning, to show

me the sin of which I was guilty, in indulging such feelings, and his words sunk deep in my heart. When I parted from him, at school time, he remarked on the beautiful appearance of the earth, clad in its robe of silver, but pointed out the new beauty it would receive when the rays of the sun should fall upon it; and he prayed that the rays of the spiritual sun might thus vivify and add new beauty to the good resolutions springing up in my mind, that the silver morning might become the golden day."

"It was indeed a golden day to me," said Louis, with emotion. "A fountain of kind feelings, which had been checked by the coldness of my companions, gushed forth at the kindness with which you treated me; and it seemed as if from that time all coldness toward me disappeared, and I was treated by all with kindness which I have ever remembered with gratitude. The little picture which you saw in the gallery is a proof of my remembrance of that day. You must take it to your father, as a token of my respect and love."

"I will gladly do so," replied William. "My father will receive it with pleasure, and it shall hang in our room as a memento of our early friendship, and of a day which I shall always remember with pleasing reflections."

TWO SIDES TO A STORY.

“I SHOULD not think you would let him off so easily, father,” exclaimed Herbert Archer, as he listened to a conversation between his father and a poor tenant who begged for a little delay in the usual demand for the rent.

“And why not, my son?” replied Mr. Archer, as they continued the walk which had been thus interrupted. “He is poor and has been unfortunate. The wealthy should not be indifferent to the sufferings of those less prosperous than themselves.”

“I know they should not, father; but did I not hear you say last winter that you would not assist Simon Brown again, for it was only encouraging him in idleness? Do you not remember what we were told about his allowing his poor wife, with her feeble health, to go out to wash, while he remained sitting quietly at home smoking his pipe and attending to the children?”

“I do recollect it well, Herbert ; but my conclusions were too hasty. Upon inquiry I found that there was another side to the story. Poor Simon had the rheumatism so badly that for several weeks he could not walk one step. In this situation he could do nothing better than to make himself useful in the house, while his wife procured what work she could to aid in the support of their family. The truth is, my son, there is almost always two sides to a story, and if we suspend our judgment until we are sure that we know all the particulars, we shall avoid the injustice which too often results from hasty decisions.”

Herbert listened with respect and attention to his father's words, and acknowledged their truth ; but it was not until after several useful lessons that he learned to put this simple rule in practice.

Among the most valued of his playthings was a fine kite, remarkable for its beauty and the swiftness of its flight.

On his return from school one pleasant afternoon, Herbert perceived that there was a fine breeze, and hastily putting away his books, ran for his kite. But, to his surprise, it was not in its proper place. Who could have taken it? He felt quite sure that he put it away when he last played with it, and he felt much displeased that any one should have ventured to touch it without his leave.

He inquired of his mother and sisters, but they knew nothing of it. He then went to the kitchen, and Alice, the chambermaid, told him that about an hour before she had seen his younger brother, Henry, with it in his hand.

"He had no business to touch it without my leave," exclaimed Herbert angrily. "I wish he would learn to let my things alone," and his feelings toward his brother were filled with unkindness.

He went to the barn in search of him, but Henry was not there. In one corner, however, he discovered his kite, soiled and torn, with the sticks broken and the tail draggled in the dirt. This sight vexed him still more, and he seized a little wagon which he had been making for his brother that morning, and dashed it in pieces.

"He is a naughty, bad boy," he exclaimed, "and I will do nothing for him."

Upon further inquiry, he found that Henry had received permission to pass the afternoon at their Uncle's, and would not return until evening.

For several hours Herbert suffered evil thoughts and feelings against his brother to remain in his mind, and he complained to his mother and several others of the injury which had been done to his favorite kite; and when his father came in to tea, he repeated the story

to him, with many severe comments on the unkindness of his brother.

He felt somewhat rebuked when his father said quietly, "Wait till you hear your brother's explanation, my son. Remember there are always two sides to a story."

"There cannot be two sides to this one, father, for Alice saw Henry with the kite in his hand, and no one else has touched it."

"Strong proof, certainly, Herbert; but, nevertheless, suspend your judgment until Henry comes. It is possible that he did not tear the kite."

Herbert was silenced, but not convinced. His feelings were not changed, and he met Henry in a sullen and irritated manner.

"Oh, Herbert!" exclaimed the little boy, "I wish you could have been with me. I have had such a delightful play with my cousins. I should have been quite happy all the afternoon, only I could not help thinking of your poor kite. Did you see it in the barn?"

"To be sure I did," replied Herbert, crossly; "I wish you had taken a fancy to destroy some other of my playthings and let my kite alone."

"Why, Herbert, I did not destroy it. I found our dog Pompey playing with it in the yard. I do not know where he got it, but I took it away as quickly as

I could. I was very sorry that I did not see him before it was spoiled."

A deep blush of shame overspread Herbert's face as he thought of the wicked and unkind feelings which he had harbored for so many hours. He now remembered perfectly, that, being called away in haste, he had left his kite beneath a tree in the yard, and no doubt Pompey had found it there. There was, indeed, two sides to this story, and now that the truth was known, it was quite plain that he alone was to blame for the accident.

His sorrow was increased when Henry eagerly inquired if he had finished the little wagon which he had begun for him in the morning.

It was hard to tell his affectionate little brother that he had been so very angry with him for his supposed injury, that he had purposely destroyed the wagon from which he had expected so much pleasure; but Herbert, though often hasty and passionate, was an honest boy, and he answered frankly,—

"I have done very wrong to-day, Henry. I supposed that you had taken my kite without leave, and had carelessly spoiled it, and I felt so angry that I tossed the wagon upon the ground and broke it; but, if you will forgive me, I will make you a much larger and better one to-morrow."

Henry readily expressed his forgiveness, and Her-

bert, of his own accord, sought his father and told him "the other side of the story."

For some time the little incident of the kite was well remembered, and served as a warning to Herbert to be less hasty in judging evil of others; but as the recollection of it faded from his mind, he was frequently led into the same error, and often had cause to repent of his rash decisions.

Among his schoolfellows was the son of a poor widow, who had, until lately, labored hard with the neighboring farmers to aid his mother in the support of her little family. His admittance into the school occasioned considerable surprise among the scholars, who had hitherto regarded him as on a footing with their fathers' workmen, rather than on an equality with themselves; and there were some who were wicked and foolish enough to wonder what business William Camden had to attend the best school in the neighborhood, and where he got the money to pay for his tuition.

The greater part, however, were pleased that he could have so good an opportunity for acquiring knowledge, and were surprised to find that he had already made great progress in many branches which they were pursuing.

Herbert Archer seemed particularly pleased with the studiousness and good behavior of the widow's son,

and with the consent of his parents frequently aided him in various ways, by presents of suitable books and other things necessary to his advancement.

There was one circumstance, however, in regard to William for which Herbert found it difficult to account. He was frequently absent from school for whole days, and when his companions inquired the cause, he would answer indefinitely that his time had been much occupied. The teacher expressed no displeasure on these occasions, which had the effect of assuring the scholars that all was right, until one unfortunate day, when a boy, who had appeared to regard William with contempt and dislike from his first entrance into the school, made a discovery which he eagerly communicated to the other pupils, hoping thereby to convince them that his opinion was well founded.

“Who would like to know the reason why William Camden stays from school so often?” he exclaimed, as he entered the school-room, where many of the boys were assembled.

A large group immediately gathered around him, and he continued in a sarcastic, contemptuous tone,—

“I have at length found out the useful business which so occupies his time. He is fond of wandering in the woods and fields, amusing himself with robbing birds’ nests.”

“For shame, George Wilson,” replied Herbert

Archer. "It is impossible that you have detected William engaged in so senseless and cruel a sport."

"Impossible or not, Master Archer," retorted the other, "it is nevertheless a fact, and I can give you ample proof of the truth of my words. One of my father's workmen has recently been engaged in cutting down several large trees in the wood adjoining our house. On the last day that William was absent from school, he assures me that he spent the whole of our school hours in climbing trees and robbing the pretty birds of their young. He reproved him for his cruelty, but William only replied that he had a use for them, and went on his way. Probably he intended to enjoy the pleasure of giving the poor things to his cat."

Herbert, who was a great enemy to all cruelty, could hardly restrain his indignation, and as William entered at that moment, he turned to him abruptly, and demanded, with some authority of manner, if it was true that he had stayed from school a few days before for the purpose of robbing birds' nests? Somewhat hurt and offended at the tone in which Herbert addressed him, and at the indignant countenances of his schoolmates, William answered, rather shortly,—

"That it was perfectly true that he had taken several young birds from their nests a day or two previous, and thought it quite probable that he should do so again, if it suited his convenience."

This was a wrong way of answering, and only increased the ill feeling which prevailed against him. George Wilson looked triumphantly at Herbert, who was only restrained from a burst of passion by the entrance of the teacher, and the usual summons to their studies.

After school, instead of joining William, as usual, that they might walk part of the way together, Herbert carefully avoided him, and selecting another companion, declared his intention of having nothing more to do with one who could thus wantonly engage in cruel sport.

This resolution he also expressed to his father, after relating to him the circumstances which had come to his knowledge. Mr. Archer shook his head, saying, "Are you sure there are not two sides to the story, my son?" But Herbert replied in a positive manner that there could not be another side, as William had himself admitted the truth of the charge.

Nothing farther was said upon the subject, and Mr. Archer soon forgot the whole affair.

Weeks passed on, and the intimacy between the two boys was not resumed. William continued to absent himself occasionally from school, and several boys testified that they had two or three times met him with young birds in his hand, and when asked what he intended doing with them, he had replied in his usual unsatisfactory manner.

One day, as Herbert was returning from school, he met an old friend of his father's, a gentleman residing in a neighboring town, at whose house he had often visited, and with whom he was very familiar. Mr. Morgan was a widower, and he had one little son several years younger than Herbert, to whose welfare he was constantly devoted.

"I am glad to see you, Herbert," he said, kindly; "it is a long time since you have visited me. My little Arthur has missed you very much."

"We shall soon have a vacation at our school," replied Herbert, "and then I shall be much pleased to come and see you. My studies occupy me very closely just now."

"That is right, my boy. Youth is the time for improvement. Speaking of your school reminds me of one of your schoolfellows, of whom I should like your opinion, for I know that boys have many opportunities of finding out each other's characters, and I can rely upon your statement. I refer to William Camden. I knew his father well. He was a sensible, honest man, and I have often thought that I should like to do something for his family. I have lately formed a plan for travelling for the next two or three years with my little boy, and I have concluded, if I can find a well-principled lad, somewhat advanced in his education, to take him with us as a sort of tutor

and companion for Arthur. I shall watch over them both myself, and shall procure the best instruction in my power at the different places where we may sojourn ; but there are many of the common branches which Arthur would learn even more readily from a sensible lad, a few years his senior, than from an older person, and he would at the same time have the advantage of a pleasant companion. The great difficulty is to find one on whose principles and habits I can fully depend. I have thought of William Camden, as I have often heard him well spoken of. His mother depends somewhat upon his assistance, but I will make that easy for them. Now, tell me plainly what you think of William."

Herbert hesitated, for he knew that the proposition of Mr. Morgan would be of great advantage to his schoolfellow ; and, in spite of his present dislike to William, he was unwilling to say any thing which might deprive him of an advantageous offer. But he thought it right to tell the whole truth, and he answered, with some indignation in his manner,—

"A few weeks ago, sir, I should have thought that William Camden would have suited your purpose better than any boy of my acquaintance, but I fear I was deceived in him. He frequently stays from school, and passes his time in the woods engaged in the cruel sport of robbing birds' nests."

“Cruel sport, indeed!” exclaimed Mr. Morgan. “A boy who will do that must be destitute of kind and generous feelings. It may seem a trifle, but it would decide me at once not to make him the companion of my son. You are sure that there is no mistake in this matter, Herbert?”

“Quite sure, sir. I heard William acknowledge it myself. I was very unwilling to believe it until there was no room for doubt.”

“I am glad I met with you,” remarked his friend. “I have another boy in view, who will perhaps suit me better. I must make all proper inquiries.”

Thus saying, he bade Herbert good afternoon, and rode away in the direction of his own home.

A few days after, Herbert accompanied his father to a large town several miles distant from their own home. While his father was engaged in the transaction of business, he walked slowly through the principal streets, amusing himself with what was passing around him, and occasionally stopping to look at something attractive in the shop windows. At length he became much interested in watching the quick motions of several birds of different kinds, whose cages were suspended at the door of a bird fancier’s establishment.

As he stood looking at their lively movements and listening to their sweet songs, he was surprised to observe William Camden standing in the shop with a

large cage in his hand containing a great many young birds of various kinds, for which he appeared to be just concluding a bargain with the bird fancier.

“This, then, is what he does with his young birds,” thought Herbert; “but why was he so secret about it?”

At this instant William turned around and recognized his companion. He colored deeply, and at first seemed inclined not to speak; but better feelings gained the ascendancy, and, approaching Herbert, he said pleasantly,—

“You have discovered what I do with my young birds. It does seem cruel to catch them, but I try to do it as kindly as possible. I seldom take more than one from a nest, and always watch the time when the old birds are absent, that I may not alarm them. The money which I earn in this way not only defrays the expenses of my education, but enables me to assist my poor mother.”

“But why were you so secret about it?” asked Herbert. “Why did you not tell us plainly for what purpose you caught the birds?”

“My first motive for secrecy,” replied William, “was to prevent thoughtless and idle boys from following my example, fearing that they would not so strictly endeavor to avoid cruelty. But when you questioned me on the subject, I should have answered

frankly had I not felt irritated by your manner, and hurt that you could suppose me capable of engaging in such an occupation for sport."

"I did wrong," replied Herbert; "as usual, my judgment was too hasty. I ask your forgiveness, William, for my suspicions; but I fear I have been the means of doing you a great injury. I must seek my father without delay;" and thus saying he abruptly departed, leaving William much surprised at his words.

Mr. Areher listened with interest to Herbert's story, and yielded to his entreaties to go immediately to Mr. Morgan, in the hope that it was not yet too late to repair the wrong which he had done his companion.

When they reached the house, Herbert's impatience was so great that he could hardly wait until the customary salutations were exchanged, before he said, with much earnestness,—

"Have you yet found any one to fill the place of which you spoke to me, Mr. Morgan?"

"I have not, my young friend. It is a more difficult task than I anticipated, and sometimes I think I will relinquish the plan altogether."

"I am so glad I am not too late," exclaimed Herbert joyfully. "I have come to tell you, sir, that what I related to you of William Camden can all be explained, and I am quite sure that he would suit you in every respect."

He then gave Mr. Morgan a full account of the whole affair, to which the gentleman listened with much satisfaction, and declared his intention of calling upon Mrs. Camden that evening.

“This will be a warning to you, my dear boy,” he said to Herbert, “to judge less rashly of the actions of your friends.”

“It will indeed, sir,” was the reply. “I have too often disregarded these warnings; but in future I am resolved never to forget that there may be ‘two sides to a story.’ ”



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